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MEMORIAL EDITION

OF

COLLECTED WORKS

OF

W. J. FOX.

VOL. III.

MISCELLANEOUS LECTURES AND SERMONS;

And Twenty Sermons on

THE PRINCIPLES OF MORALITY INCULCATED IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

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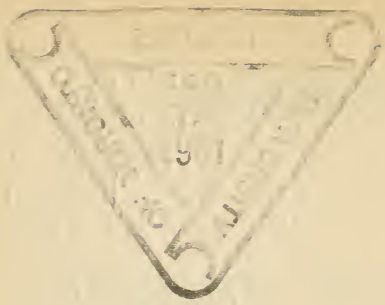

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CHRISTIAN MORALITY:

Twenty Sermons

ON

THE PRINCIPLES OF MORALITY INCULCATED IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES,

AND THEIR APPLICATION TO THE PRESENT CONDITION OF SOCIETY;

PRECEDED BY

LECTURES AND SERMONS

ON VARIOUS SUBJECTS.

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THE

COLLECTED WORKS OF W. J. FOX.

THE APOSTLE JOHN A UNITARIAN:

A Letter to the Rev. C. J. Blomfield, D.D., Rector of St. Botolph's, Bishopsgate, and Archdeacon of Colchester, occasioned by his "Five Lectures on the Gospel of St. John as bearing Testimony to the Divinity of our Saviour."

[1823; Second Edition, 1829.]

To the Rev. C. J. Blomfield, D.D.

SIR,—The perusal of your *Five Lectures on the Gospel of St. John* has afforded me much pleasure. They are written, generally, with a temper worthy of the gentleman, the scholar, and the Christian, and form a gratifying contrast with but too many of the attacks which are continually levelled against Unitarianism and Unitarians. Many useful remarks are interspersed, tending to separate controversy from the evils which often result from it, and to render it subservient to the discovery of truth and the increase of piety. Your object, to show that the Apostle John designed in his gospel to inculcate the Deity of Christ, is fairly stated, and your mode of pursuing it is candid and judicious,—though you have not, as it seems to me, been successful; a circumstance which I must be allowed to class with those from which my pleasure has been derived, inasmuch as the failure of so accomplished an advocate, in a court of his own selection, may be *justly* presumed to indicate some weakness in the cause he pleads. That you *have* failed, I shall endeavour to prove in the

following pages. Nor is it necessary, I trust, for me to apologise for making such an attempt, as your avowed aim is to "resist the propagation" of Unitarian doctrines in a neighbourhood where the free and unanimous voice of a Christian society has stationed me for their promotion.

My remarks will be restricted to such of your arguments as are designed to prove the *proper Deity* of Jesus Christ. He may possess a superhuman nature, he may have existed ages before he was born of Mary, and yet not be God. The negation of his preëxistence is not essential to Unitarianism, and the subject is comparatively unimportant. I have no doubt as to what the scriptures teach concerning it, nor any desire to shrink from its discussion; but the state of my health, which allows of but little exertion, bodily or mental, and the limits of this letter,—for I propose to write a tract, and not a volume,—induce me to waive, at least on the present occasion, any notice of your reasonings in its favour. They prove nothing as to the main point which you undertook to establish, viz. that Jesus Christ is the Eternal and Infinite God.

And here, by the way, is one reason why the term *Humanitarian*, by which you wish to designate us, "is hardly come into general use," and hardly will. It refers to a subordinate article of our faith, or I should rather say the faith of a part of us; for many avowed Unitarians are believers in the preëxistence of Christ. It is, besides, open to the very objection which you urge against the term *Unitarian*. The Athanasian Creed teaches that Christ was "very man;" and Trinitarians profess to maintain the doctrine of his humanity "as strenuously as the Unitarians themselves." If the worshipers of Three Divine Persons be, as you affirm, Unitarians, they do not generally like to be called so; nor, certainly, does the term, to any common apprehension, seem so descriptive of them as of the worshipers of One Divine Person, in whose religious system there is but "One God, the Father, of whom are all things; and one Lord, Jesus Christ, by whom are all things." It is distinctive, so long as we maintain that God is One Being, Person, or Mind, and other Christians withhold their assent from that great truth.

I am constrained to qualify my approbation of the candid tone of your *Lectures* by the term "generally;" for

on some occasions you have forgotten to sustain it as became you, and have made assertions but little in unison with the admission of our sincerity in your preface. Thus you say, after Dr. Balguy, "Let not such interpreters complain of the hardship of subscribing to human articles. To all appearance they will never be at a loss to accommodate *any* article to any doctrine." If so, why, sir, are not our ministers in your church, subscribing its articles, enjoying its emoluments, and exercising its influence? What keeps us out? What drove out our Lindseys, Jebbs, and Wakefields? I doubt not but that what they relinquished for conscience' sake, many possess with a good conscience; but your church has levied its penalty on their integrity, and ought not to deny the existence of the very quality which she has so heavily taxed.

You have employed other expressions which are objectionable (pp. 18, 46, 47), as they seem to ascribe to Unitarians a determination to bend revelation to their own fancies. Such a determination presupposes a strong interest in making the worse appear the better reason; it implies that much is to be gained in money, fame, or power by the profession of Unitarianism. If it were patronised by the court or by the multitude, by our houses of legislature or by our halls of learning; if it were connected with large possessions and high dignities, the monopoly of office, and the command of the nation's purse,—then indeed there might be some show of plausibility in such imputations. You know how unlike this is to the actual state of things; and I know that few persons can adopt our views without painful sacrifices in their interests, their feelings, or their prospects.

In one instance your charges have assumed a still more unwarrantable shape, and you have intimated that we not only misinterpret, but corrupt by interpolation, the text itself of scripture. Having explained John viii. 58 ("Before Abraham was, I am") of the preëxistence of Christ, you ask, "What do the Unitarians say to this? *They insert a word in the text.*" This language is calculated to produce an impression on the minds of your hearers and readers, naturally relying on your authority as a scholar, a critic, and a minister of the gospel, which I cannot suppose you intended, and which you will probably feel it

incumbent on you to remove. Such a charge was neither just nor prudent. Not just, for they might not know, as you do, that in the very chapter in which the Unitarians have committed the offence of inserting the word *he* to complete the sentence, "Before Abraham was, I am *he*," the authorised translators have *twice* inserted the very same word to complete a similar construction: "if ye believe not that I am *he*" (ver. 24), and "then shall ye know that I am *he*" (ver. 28); nor was it prudent for you thus to provoke the inquiry *why*, after having twice inserted the pronoun after the substantive verb, did those translators omit it in the third instance? And also the further inquiry, why, in your reference to the First Epistle of John, you have omitted to notice two much more extraordinary insertions by Trinitarian translators and transcribers; I mean that in 1 John iii. 16, where the former have added the words marked in italics, "Hereby perceive we the love *of God*, because he laid down his life for us;" and 1 John v. 7, "There are three that bear record," &c., where the latter have inserted the whole text. Your hearers and readers might not know this, as you do; but it would have been well to have given them the information, and to have suppressed the charge which has occasioned these observations.

It is because calmness and candour prevail through your Lectures that these exceptions require notice. The calumnies of a violent bigot carry with them their own corrective; but the most groundless accusations may make considerable impression when a fair and temperate writer lends them his sanction.

I shall now examine your alleged proofs of the Supreme Deity of Christ from the Gospel of John, and if I explain them satisfactorily, they will afford such negative evidence as the case admits that the apostle was a Unitarian; of which conclusion I shall also advance positive evidence.

The evangelist has told us his design in the composition of his gospel: "These are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing, ye might have life through his name" (xx. 31).

The two appellations here given to Jesus are apparently synonymous. If "Christ" describes his office, which you do not deny, "Son of God" can scarcely be referred to his

nature. Both terms imply inferiority. Every "Christ" or "anointed" is anointed by a real or supposed superior; and every son is inferior, in age at least, to his father. "God anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit and with power" (Acts x. 38); and as *his* God, *i. e.* infinitely his superior, he anointed the Son with the oil of gladness above his fellows (Heb. i. 9).

When you speak of "the Son of God," as "existent from eternity with the Father," I cannot associate any distinct ideas with your words. "Father" and "Son" are terms inseparably connected with prior and subsequent existence. The cause must precede the effect. The apostle wrote to instruct persons who had never seen or heard of a son as old as his father, and to whom, therefore, the declaration that Jesus was the Son of God would be equivalent with a declaration that he was not eternal; and if so, not God.

To be "the Son" is inconsistent, not only with eternity, but with self-existence. You allow that Christ was *generated*, although you affirm the peculiarity of the mode of generation—a circumstance of little moment; as any mode of causation, whether we call it generation or creation, implies the superiority of the producer. If, as Archbishop Wake has it, Christ was "made by God partaker of the divine nature," and "received his divine nature from the Father, who is the beginning and root of the Divinity," we may ask what Christ would have been if the Father had not bestowed that gift? He would not have been God; he had the divine nature, not of himself, but by gift. But the Father, who had it to bestow, would not have been less divine for retaining or withholding it; he would still have been God, and God alone. And if he is omnipotent, he must always be able to resume what he once gave. So that, according to your own hypothesis, so far as you have stated it, and so far as it is intelligible, Christ is, after all, not the Supreme God, but only a Deity by donation, by sufferance, and in dependence upon the Father.

Do you deny the personality of God? If not, then is the Son of God a distinct person, and consequently not God. That God is a person, nature and revelation abundantly testify; and though, upon your system, "the Son" may be a distinct person from the Father, and be God notwithstanding, yet he who is a distinct person from God,

as the Son *of God* must be, cannot be God upon any system.

Every reader of the New Testament must be so familiar with the application of the title *Sons of God* to human beings in a state of religious privilege, as to render citations needless. In the Old Testament, Israel is the *son*, and Ephraim is the *first-born* of God. It behoves you to assign far more clear and cogent reasons than you have yet advanced for referring, in the case of our Lord, to a distinction of nature, that title which in all other cases indicates only a distinction of office, character, or privilege. Give us evidence for this wide departure from the common acceptation of the phrase in the sacred writings. The epithet "only-begotten" is insufficient, for Isaac is called the only-begotten of Abraham (Hebrews xi. 17), when he had an elder brother living. The reason appears to be the stronger affection of his father, or the better destiny of which he was the heir. Either will account for the application of the epithet to Christ. We read also, in the introduction of the gospel before us, of other sons of God "which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." Can you produce a stronger or more explicit declaration of the divine generation of Christ than this is, taken literally, of the divine generation of believers? I am convinced that you cannot; and yet they were not divine persons.

The argument from the introduction to St. John's Gospel rests altogether upon the assumed personality of *the Word*. This assumption is favoured by the use of the masculine pronoun in the common translation,—"all things were made by *him*," &c.; but the impersonal pronoun *it* would not be a less faithful rendering of the original. Campbell, though he was a Trinitarian, and supposed that the deity of Christ was taught in this passage, yet commences his version thus: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. This was in the beginning with God. All things were made by it, and without it not a single creature was made. In it was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shone in darkness; but the darkness admitted it not." He affirms this way of rendering to be agreeable to the practice of *all translators*, except the English, so far as he had ob

served; and that with them, every version which preceded the common one "uniformly employed the neuter pronoun *it*."

The operations ascribed to *the Word* are by no means such as to prove its personality, but are precisely the same with, or very similar to, what is attributed to the Divine Word, or Wisdom, in many other parts of scripture which are readily understood. When we read that the word of God abideth for ever (1 Pet. i. 23); that wisdom was by him when he appointed the foundations of the earth (Prov. viii. 30); and was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was (Prov. viii. 23); that God is light (1 John i. 5); that by the word of the Lord the heavens were made, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth (Psalm xxxiii. 6); that the words which Christ spake were spirit and life (John vi. 63); that the word of God is a lamp to the feet, and a light to the path (Psalm cxix. 105); that it is quick and powerful, and a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart (Heb. iv. 12); that it is not bound, though its promulgators may be (2 Tim. ii. 9); that it came unto the prophets, and by them to the Jews, the peculiar people of God (Hosea i. 2; Isaiah ix. 8); that the word of his grace is able to build us up, and give us an inheritance among all them that are sanctified (Acts xx. 32); and that Christ was the way, the truth, and the life (John xiv. 6); the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. i. 24),—and therefore, in an easy and obvious sense, the Word of God,—we have, I apprehend, a much better illustration of the meaning of the evangelist than any unscriptural commentary can furnish. We need not look further to account for his phraseology, or to ascertain his object.

Take *the Word* impersonally, and it is no longer strange that it should be with God, and at the same time be God himself. Wisdom is "*by* him," and Forgiveness is "*with* him" (Psalm cxxx. 4), and yet he *is* Light and Love. To show the absurdity of a personal interpretation, you have only to substitute in the text the terms which you hold equivalent to those employed by the evangelist. By the *Word*, you understand the *Son;* and by *God*, sometimes the *three persons* whom you equally adore, and sometimes *the Father* only, as when you speak (p. 13) of Christ as "distinguished from God in person." Let the first verse

be a test of both explanations. The one makes it: "In the beginning was the Son, and the Son was with the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and the Son was the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost." With the other meaning substituted, it will be: "In the beginning was the Son, and the Son was with the Father, and the Son was the Father." Your theory only gives the choice between two results, one false, the other nonsensical.

I agree with you, that in ver. 14 the word "flesh" means "a human person," and that this person, Jesus the Christ, is identified with the Word, which is also identified with God. The wisdom and power which have eternally belonged to, and been inseparable from, the Deity; which were displayed in creation, in providence, in the Jewish dispensation,—were far more completely manifested in Christ. He not only preached, but *was* the word; his teaching, miracles, death, resurrection, and exaltation *are* the word; they are the gospel, the brightest illustration of our Father's will and purposes, the delineation of our duty, the source of our faith, the pledge of our immortality. This is intelligible; it is scriptural; and it is consistent with itself and with the design of the writer. But you contend that a Divine Person "was made flesh, *i. e.* a human person." Infinite Spirit transmuted into flesh and blood! God made into a man! Your interpretation means this, or it means nothing. Accordingly you make no scruple of adjuring the Deity by his nativity and circumcision, his agony and bloody sweat, his death, burial, and resurrection. It were better to "worship the Father in spirit and in truth. He seeketh such to worship him."

You then proceed to argue, from various passages in the first four chapters of John, that Christ was the Son of God in a sense peculiar to himself, that he was more than mere man, because he was "in the bosom of the Father," that he came from heaven by "literal descent," &c.; all which deserves consideration in a discussion of his preexistence, but as it does nothing towards demonstrating his supreme divinity, I pass it over for the reason already assigned, and come at once to your reasoning on ch. v. 17-30.

The Jews sought to slay Jesus because he had healed an impotent man on the sabbath-day. He defended him-

self by saying, "My Father worketh hitherto and I work;" "that is" (according to your paraphrase), "my Father exercises his power and providence continually, without the intervention of rest; in like manner, I perform divine works" (how?—without the intervention of rest, as it should be to make out the similarity?—No, but) "when I please."

The Jews might have replied to such an argument, that, according to scripture, God rested on the sabbath-day, and therefore *he* should rest; or they might have urged that the continuity of the operations of Providence was no vindication of our working when there was a divine command to cease. The occasion guides us to our Lord's meaning. When he says, "I work," he refers to the *miracle.* This he wrought by the power of the Father who dwelt in him, by his aid and impulse; and feeling that impulse and receiving that power on the sabbath-day, he could not but exert it then. That they were given, and by him who made the law, was his vindication in exercising them regardless of that law.

This was certainly an "assumption of divine authority," if by that expression you mean a divine commission. In that sense, Moses had "divine authority" to impose the law, prophets to revive and enforce it, and Christ for its repeal. But you proceed as if divine authority were equivalent with personal deity.

"So his hearers understood it; 'Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill him, because he not only had broken the sabbath, but said also that God was his Father, making himself equal with God' (ver. 18). You will remark, that the evangelist does not say that the Jews *supposed* Jesus to have said this, or that they misunderstood him; but that they were incensed because he actually did make himself equal with God" (p. 49).

The evangelist's authority might as well have been pleaded for our Lord's having actually broken the sabbath, which accusation he has recorded in precisely the same way.

Christ did claim to be a fellow-worker with God; so Paul calls himself and others "labourers together with God," and "workers together with him" (1 Cor. iii. 9; 2 Cor. vi. 1).

By the phrase rendered "equal with God," did the Jews intend a personal equality, or an assumption of divine

authority, a right to repeal what God had enacted, which right might be conferred on any one by a divine commission, miraculously attested?

For the former they had no ground but Christ's calling God his Father; and although you affirm that they understood this to imply "an immediate connection with him of a peculiar and sublime nature," yet you have conceded (p. 31) that this did not extend, even with the most enlightened and pious of them, to the notion of proper Deity. Whether, therefore, our Lord disclaimed or asserted this, does not affect our present controversy. That he disclaimed any thing like a proper and personal equality will abundantly appear if we follow you through his reply.

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Son can do nothing of himself but what he seeth the Father do; for what things soever he doeth, these doeth the Son likewise" (ver. 19).

"The Son, then, has equal power with the Father." I can scarcely repress my astonishment at this inference. The miraculous power was the same in the Father and the Son; whatsoever the Father did, in this respect, the Son did likewise, for the Father wrought the miracle *by* the Son; but our Lord draws the distinction of dependence in the one and independence in the other—the broad line that separates the creature from the Creator: *the Son can do nothing of himself.* He was the Father's agent, his sole agent, in miraculous works (the subject of the discussion), "for the Father loveth the Son, and showeth him all things that himself doeth" (ver. 20). You justly remark on this, that "the word 'showeth' evidently means a communication not only of knowledge, but of power." This then is conclusive. Christ speaks of himself, in his highest nature and character, as the Son, and yet as receiving knowledge and power, which *cannot be communicated* to God. The Son then cannot be God. This is further evident from the *progressive* character of the Divine instructions, or communications to Christ. "And he will show him greater works than these, that ye may marvel." It sounds somewhat uncouthly to say that God received knowledge and power to perform certain works, and expected afterwards to receive higher degrees of them for the accomplishment of greater works. Can Godhead be not only communicated, but gradually communicated?

Can Eternity and Infinity, Omnipotence and Omniscience, be the natural attributes of a person, and yet be imparted to him, and imparted by degrees, in such portions as were needful? You say that our Lord proceeds to declare "the raising the dead to life, and the final judgment of mankind to be committed to him by the Father, and yet to belong to him by virtue of his own power." Of the first of these assertions I find abundant proof in the remainder of the discourse, of the latter not a vestige. Indeed I cannot imagine to what you refer in it, unless it be a single expression at the close of ver. 21, "For as the Father raiseth up the dead and quickeneth them, even so the Son quickeneth whom he will," which must surely be understood of that derived authority and power which he immediately mentions, and dwells upon through the whole of his argument. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son. For as the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of Man. I can of mine own self do nothing; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just; because I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me."

Throughout this passage, be it observed, the Saviour speaks of himself in that character, the Son, which, as you contend, implies Deity. And what sort of a Deity does it describe? A God who is the son of man; who is the recipient of knowledge, power, authority, and honour; who can do nothing independently; and who sought the accomplishment, not of his own will, but of that of a Father and a Sender, and, consequently, a Superior. The distinction of two natures is unavailing here; the evangelist describes his Master, or, more correctly, his Master describes himself, in his highest nature, character, or dignity.

Let us now turn back to ver. 23: "That all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father which hath sent him." On this passage I shall make three brief observations.

1. You have here interpreted the word translated "even as" of a proper equality, in direct opposition to your own interpretation of the same term in John xvii. 23 (p. 79),

and to its obvious meaning, on your own principles, in the following passages: xiii. 34, xv. 9, xvii. 11, 16, 18, xx. 21.

2. If this self-destroyed interpretation be conceded, still the words may only mean a parity of obligation, and not of honour. We are bound to pay a small debt, *even as* we are bound to pay one of large amount, by the same law of justice. We are bound to honour Christ for all he did and suffered in the work of our salvation, *even as* we are bound to honour God, who sent and strengthened him for that purpose; by the same law of love, though not with the same degree of gratitude.

3. Even if the further concession be made, that a parity of honour is intended, still it is incumbent on you to prove that religious worship was the kind of honour in question. The context leads to a different conclusion. The words which precede ver. 23, ch. v. ("the Father hath committed all judgment to the Son"), and those which follow ("Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth (observeth) my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life"), are good reasons for obeying the Son even as we obey the Father, but are not applicable to adoring the Son even as we adore the Father. That he who obeyeth not the commands of the Son obeyeth not the commands of the Father who sent him, was true (as well as applicable) then, and is true still. But that he who adoreth not the Son adoreth not the Father who sent him, is neither. This is not the fact now, nor was it then. It was not true of the Jews; it was not true of the disciples; it was not true of Jesus himself, who, according to your distinction of his natures, prayed as a human and not as a divine being, and who therefore was under equal obligation to worship God the Father and God the Son, but who both taught and practised the adoration of the Father only.

You seem to rely much on x. 30, "I and my Father are one," as an obvious assumption of Deity. One would have supposed that the first time that a reference was made to ch. xvii. 21-23 would also have been the last time that any reply would have been required to this inference. The expressions are so similar, so identical rather, and the diversity of the meaning from that which you ascribe to them is so striking, that the question should be laid to rest. "That

they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me. And the glory which thou hast given me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me." You allow (p. 78) that "the intimate love and union" here described between the Father and the Son is the model "of that love which ought to subsist between Christians, as far as the difference of their natures will permit." But the union of two divine persons in one divine essence can be no model of union to us. A union of affection and purpose is all that can be meant, and this may subsist between the creature and the Creator; it does subsist, as this beautiful prayer teaches us, between God and good men; and if a certain degree of it does not deify them, neither can a higher degree of it deify Christ.

The union meant by our Lord is also indicated by the argument which he was pursuing. He was proving the safety of his followers. They had him for a Protector; "neither shall any man pluck them out of my hand" (ver. 28). But his Father was a more powerful Protector, and if they could be proved to be under his care, the assurance was complete. "My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all, and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand" (ver. 29). This proof is furnished by ver. 30: "I and my Father are one." Not one being, for then the security of the disciples would have been left just where it was in ver. 28, instead of being strengthened by the following verse; but one in design and purpose, so that those on whose behalf Christ exerted his delegated powers might rely on the guardianship of his Father's omnipotence.

You say the Jews understood ver. 30 "in the obvious sense of the words," meaning the sense which you affix to them. You seem partial to their authority as interpreters of the words of Christ, but there is a higher authority which here warrants my contradicting you. We have our Lord's testimony (ver. 36) that the charge of blasphemy was founded, not on his claiming a certain oneness with

God, but on his calling God his Father. They did not therefore understand ver. 30 of an essential union, or of any union implying equality; for if they had, it would have been a far more plausible foundation for the accusation than that which they selected. The expression did not convey to Jewish ears any such assumption as you have discovered in it, and your interpretation therefore falls to the ground.

Still you contend that the title Son of God implies a divine nature, or its assumption could not be blasphemy. But even if it had implied Deity, its assumption was not blasphemy, as you will readily perceive by consulting the description of that offence in the Mosaic code (Lev. xxiv. 10-16). It might be presumption, it might be insanity, but it was not blasphemy. Your supposition will not account for the accusation. It is rather to be ascribed to the too common disposition of bigots to bestow opprobrious names, and invoke heavy punishments upon what offends them, however far it may be from deserving such names or such inflictions. That this disposition influenced the Jews is evident from their illegal extension of the penalties of blasphemy to words spoken against Moses, the temple, and the law (see Acts vi. 11, 12).

The reply of Christ to the Jews is also our reply to you. "Jesus answered them, Is it not written in your law, I said, Ye are gods? If he called them gods unto whom the word of God came, and the scripture cannot be broken, say ye of him whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world, Thou blasphemest, because I said, I am the Son of God?" (vers. 34-36.) Here are three positions: 1. That scripture applies the term god to men on account of their official dignity. They were called gods because the word of God came to them, not because they possessed the divine nature, or were persons in the Godhead. 2. That their official dignity was inferior to that of Christ. To them the word of God came, but him the Father sanctified and sent into the world. The disparity is in office, not in nature. He asserts a right the same in kind, but higher in degree. 3. That notwithstanding this right, he had not used that title, but only the humbler appellation of Son of God. "I said, I am the Son of God." We cannot suppose any thing like equivocation here. Our Lord virtually denies the assumption of the divine name; therefore he did not assume

it, nor any title equivalent with it, as you suppose he did. God, and Son of God, were not, in *his* estimation, convertible terms, nor did the application of the former to other persons than the Father imply a participation of his divine nature; *à fortiori,* that of the latter, Son of God, could not.

If "our Saviour spoke of himself to the learned Jews under the most exalted of all the titles which they applied to the Messiah," then God was not one of those titles, for that he disclaims. Nor did they expect the Messiah to be God, for then they would have called him so.

A brief notice will suffice of the use made in your *Lectures* of the commencement of ch. xiv. You ask whether such language as "Ye believe in God, believe also in me" (ver. 1), could have been used without presumption by a mere man? That is not exactly the question between us, but it might be soon answered. "The people feared the Lord, and believed the Lord and his servant Moses" (Exodus xiv. 31). The man Moses is here classed with Jehovah as an object of belief.* "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father" cannot be predicated of a personal vision. In that sense, "no man hath seen God at any time." That by the discourses of Christ he was made visible to the intellectual sight, is a fact perfectly independent on the nature of him who delivered those discourses. That Christ was in the Father, and the Father in him (ver. 10), was a privilege which he prayed might be extended to his disciples (xvii. 21), and therefore no better proof of his godhead than of theirs. Besides, he illustrates this indwelling by immediately adding: "The words that I speak unto you, I speak not of myself; but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works." Where was the deity of the Son, if the Father supplied the wisdom and the power? Is this "speaking of them in terms of perfect similarity as to nature and quality"? Does it not make the Father every thing, and the Son nothing independently,—nothing but as inspired and empowered by him?

A striking instance of the immense conclusions which the advocates of your opinions are apt to pile upon the slenderest basis is presented in your remarks on ver. 13: "Whatsoever ye shall ask in my name, that will I do, that

* See also 1 Sam. xii. 18; 1 Chron. xxix. 20; 2 Chron. xxxi. 8; 1 Thess. ii. 10, and various other passages, for similar combinations.

the Father may be glorified in the Son." That prophets are said to do what they predict, and that our Lord received from his Father all needful powers to bestow on the apostles for the establishment of his cause, will prevent the Unitarian from feeling any difficulty about this passage, except the difficulty of comprehending how it could ever have been connected with the following commentary: "Here is a plain declaration, that whatsoever degree of power the apostles might require, and pray for, as his disciples, he himself would grant it; and that for a particular purpose, that God the Father might be glorified by the establishment of a religion, *the foundation of which was to be a belief in God the Son.*" What did the evangelist know of "God the Son," whom neither he nor any apostolic writer has ever named? The notion of such a Deity may be the foundation of your faith—I believe it is, for you tell me so; but I do not believe it was of theirs, for they do not tell me so; and the appellation was either utterly unknown, or uniformly rejected by them. They had but "One God, the Father;" he was their "only true God;" he was the God of Christ.

I shall reply at once to what you next urge as to our Lord's conferring the Holy Spirit by his own authority, and to your previous remarks on his mode of working miracles (pp. 32-36), with which it is connected, as a particular instance of the supposed general principle. Your argument is fully comprised in the following paragraph:

"If now, as the Unitarians say, power was communicated to Christ, as it was afterwards to the apostles, how can we account for the fact that our Lord always spoke of performing miracles on his own authority, and by virtue of his intrinsic power, while the apostles studiously avoided all appearance of claiming such a power, and represented themselves as mere instruments in the hands of God?"

The apostles wrought miracles only to attest the truth of their Master's doctrine, and the fact of his resurrection; he wrought them to confirm his own claims to be the Messiah. This would produce some diversity in their manner, and such we find. But that he "*always* spoke of performing miracles on his own authority, and *by virtue of his intrinsic power*," I must absolutely deny, or that he *ever* did so. If there be an instance, let it be produced. Your cases are not in point. The strongest only shows

that he sometimes omitted audibly to refer—or that the evangelist omitted to record his reference—to the origin of the power which he exercised; an omission which can prove nothing so long as other instances are preserved in which he explicitly declared its derivation from the Father. Thus you cite his assertion concerning his body, "I will raise it up" (John ii. 19); but he does not add, "by my own intrinsic power;" and in your very next citation, where, referring to the same event, he says of his life, "I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take (or receive) it again" (x. 17), he *does* add, which you have omitted, "This commandment have I received of my Father." Here was an explicit recognition of the authority under which he acted. Has he not also said elsewhere, "I live by the Father" (vi. 57), and "the Father hath given to the Son to have life in himself" (v. 26)?

In your other alleged instance of our Lord's acting on his own authority, when he said, "Receive ye the Holy Spirit," &c. (xx. 22, 23), you have overlooked the introductory sentence, "As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you," which intimates that as he imparted to them the powers required by their mission, so had the Father previously imparted to him the higher powers required by his mission, in which, indeed, theirs was included. In imparting the Holy Spirit, he only gave what he had first received; "for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him" (iii. 34).

The resurrection of Lazarus, of which miracle the circumstances are more minutely recorded than of perhaps any other in the New Testament, clearly appears to have taken place in answer to prayer, and is so acknowledged by our Lord, with an expression of gratitude: "Father, I thank thee that thou hast heard me" (xi. 41). It has also led to the record of evidence (to the utter destruction of your hypothesis) that he always prayed for the power to perform a miracle. "I knew that thou hearest me always:" a fact of which the sister of Lazarus seems to have been aware, and to refer to. "I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, God will give it thee" (ver. 22).

And, finally, Christ has declared of his miracles generally, that they were not wrought by his own, but by his Father's power, and in his Father's name: "I do nothing

of myself" (viii. 28). "The Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works" (xiv. 10). "The works that I do in my Father's name, they bear witness of me" (x. 25).

Throughout your remarks on chap. xvii. you labour under an embarrassment inseparable from any attempt to explain the scriptures on the Trinitarian system. The act of prayer is that of an inferior to a superior; and you are therefore compelled to allow that this was offered up by Christ "in his character of Messiah, as sent by the Father into the world," *i. e.* in a subordinate character. But the prayer itself shows, and you strenuously maintain from certain expressions in it, that it was uttered by Christ in the highest character which belonged to him. Therefore in his highest capacity he was inferior to the Father. Either the language on which you comment, in vers. 1, 2, 4, 10, &c., is consistent with dignified humanity, which you deny; or prayer, dependence, and subordination, are consistent with Deity, which you also deny. It was said in reference to a speculation of Dr. Priestley's, that he proved all things to be material, by proving matter itself spiritual: and you can only prove from this prayer that Christ possessed the essential attributes of Deity by a process which divests Deity itself of those very attributes. Either a created being might have glory with God before the world was, &c., or else the Creator offered prayer to a superior.

Your gloss on ver. 3, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," in which you say, "There is no contradistinction in this passage between God and Christ; but between the one true God and the false gods of the heathens," is really not deserving of an argument in reply. I shall only give an illustration. Suppose that a plain man were admitted to court, and there saw a person, to all appearance a subject like himself, doing homage to the king, kneeling before the throne, and presenting a petition with this expression: "Thou art the only true king of this country, and I am thine accredited messenger or ambassador." Would he infer that this petitioner was joint sovereign with the monarch whom he addressed,—who never did homage, or offered petitions to *him*,—that he was possessed of power equal, independent, and coextensive, and that the design of what he uttered was to distinguish his

fellow-monarch from foreign pretenders, but not from himself? Would the scene he had witnessed have any other influence than to make him suspect that any one who should attempt to prove to him, by the evidence of this very circumstance, that the petitioner was a coequal sovereign, was somewhat deficient in veracity or in common sense?

Your remark on the knowledge of God and that of Christ is, I think, sufficiently answered by the explanatory references which I have made on xiv. 1.

On receiving the palpable proof which he had required of the resurrection of Christ, Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord! and, my God!" (xx. 28.) I agree with you, that the first exclamation, "My Lord!" refers to Christ. You say, "We can hardly"—I think we may easily—"separate the two" exclamations, as I shall term them; for that they are "two members of a sentence" is a gratuitous assumption on your part. Their division is perfectly natural, because they correspond with the emotions which would, in the most rapid succession, be excited towards different objects in the apostle's mind. By the first he recognises the identity of Christ, and in the second he reverences the power of God who had raised him from the dead. Were you, sir, visited by some friend whom you had seen committed to the tomb, your feelings would, I think, on receiving a similar proof of his identity, flow in the same course, and with the same rapidity. In the first moment of astonished conviction, you would call him by his name; your immediately succeeding feeling would be an adoring gratitude towards the Almighty Author of the change.

The coupling together of two exclamations, addressed to different persons, without noticing that circumstance, the terms being supposed to explain themselves, is analogous to the quotation of expressions from different passages united in a similar way. Thus Acts i. 20: "It is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein; *and* his bishopric let another take." The first is from Psalm xix., the latter from Psalm cix. There is as much plausibility in their being a continued sentence, as in the speech of Thomas being a continued address to the same person.

You rely on the phrase, "Thomas answered and said unto him," as a fatal objection to the Unitarian interpretation. It does not apply at all to that which I have given, and which you may find in some of our best writers. If it did, however, the objection is not fatal, unless you maintain, on similar grounds, the deity of David, for "Jonathan said unto David, O Lord God of Israel, when I have sounded my father," &c. (1 Sam. xx. 12).

The occasion is manifestly and strongly against your exposition. It is clear that up to this time Thomas had no notion of the deity of the Messiah, or he would not have been such a sceptic as to the resurrection. His doubt was whether, as the other apostles affirmed, the Lord was risen. The appearance of Christ was to remove this doubt by ocular and palpable demonstration of his corporeal identity. We learn what the conviction was by the means which led to it. That Christ, risen, had the same form and features as before his death,—nay, that he retained the prints of the nails in his hands and feet, and the wound of the spear in his side,—might and did demonstrate that the appearance was not a phantom, a ghost or spirit, or an impostor; but did not and could not prove to Thomas, or to any one, that he was Jehovah. It proved that he was corporeal, not that he was the Infinite Spirit; that he had died and risen, not that he was the immutable and ever-living God.

I shall now make a few general remarks upon the kind of evidence which you have adduced, and which, if it be valid for your purpose, must also lead to other conclusions which are not generally admitted by Christians.

1. Your arguments imply that the prejudiced and bigoted Jews understood and interpreted our Lord's discourses better than his own apostles. The exclamation of Thomas, after the resurrection, you regard as "the first time that Christ is called God by any of his disciples." Had they previously understood him to teach his own deity, it is fair to presume that they would have called him so long before, and repeatedly. You have allowed that they did not. "Our Saviour here (John xvii.) declares that his apostles were fully convinced of his being indeed the Messiah. *This was the extent of their knowledge and their faith at that period*" (p. 73). Yet you have repeatedly adduced

the authority of the unbelieving Jews for your Trinitarian exposition of the language of Christ (pp. 49, 57). They, if you be right, caught the genuine import of expressions which were lost upon those whom he was preparing to be the instructors of the human race. He was intelligible to his enemies at the same time that he was obscure to his pupils. Scribes and Pharisees were enlightened, though apostles remained in darkness. To embrace the Trinitarian exposition of the passages on which you place so much dependence, we must follow those whom he denominated "blind guides" in preference to those whom he selected to become lights of the world. Nay, I do not see how the apostles can be exonerated from the censure which you level at those who are not convinced, by the language in ch. v., of your doctrine: "To him who can rise from the perusal of this chapter of St. John unmoved by the evidence which it affords to the great doctrine of a divine Redeemer, we may surely apply the same language of expostulation in which our Lord addressed the Jews. No reasoning, no moral demonstration, will satisfy him who will not receive, with simplicity and meekness, the plain words of Scripture, —if he still remain in a state of doubt and unbelief, all further argument is vain." Now, sir, by your own statement, just quoted, the faith of the disciples, some time after this discourse was delivered, did not extend to the Godhead of Christ. The modern Unitarians, whom you so condemn for not being convinced by it, are only in the same predicament with those ancient Unitarians, the apostles. If there *be* ground for rebuke, it falls most heavily on them, for they had directly from Christ, and in their native tongue, what we receive through the medium of a disciple's record, and in a dead language. When we attempt to hurl thunderbolts, we should at least look carefully about us, to see where they may fall.

2. We must also believe, on your principles, that Christ communicated divine truth most unreservedly to those who were least fit for its reception, contrary to your just observation (p. 48), "that divine knowledge is most readily and abundantly communicated to those minds which are least possessed of prejudice, or by an opinion of superior wisdom." To Nathanael, to the Samaritans, who received him so readily, to his disciples, he is silent about that Godhead

which you suppose him to assert to the hostile Jews. You have remarked this strange circumstance, and endeavoured to account for it by supposing that he who was God, and told his enemies so, had recourse to the language of submission and prayer to that very God which he was, to give an example of piety. The explanation is alone enough to discredit the supposed fact.

3. If the declaration that "the Word" (a divine Being, as you teach) "was made flesh" be taken literally, why should not "This is my body" be taken literally also? If "it is not our part to devise schemes for avoiding the difficulties of revelation, but to take each truth separately as we find it declared in Scripture," why should you not take the latter as well as the former? The declaration is as express. The mystery is not greater. Nor if it were, would that be a fatal objection with you. The one supposes Deity compressed into the prison-house of flesh; and the other supposes flesh extended into the ubiquity of Deity. If you will not allow reason to protest against the first proposition, you cannot consistently reject the second on her authority.

4. You have conceded that the Deity of Christ is nowhere so clearly taught as in the gospel of John; that the epistles fall short of it; and that the other Evangelists did not design to teach that doctrine (pp. 3-5). If, then, I have shown that his pages do not bear out your inferences, the whole controversy is decided, and Unitarianism allowed to be the doctrine of the New Testament. I deduce another inference from the concession. Your system, if it can be reared at all, must be built upon the ruins of the characters of the other apostles and evangelists. The gospel of John was certainly one of the last written books of the New Testament. The Godhead of Christ is, according to you, the foundation of Christianity, and yet for thirty or forty years none of the sacred penmen attempted to lay that foundation; they went on writing and publishing, as though they had been Unitarians; and reserved for almost the final work a statement of that doctrine which, if true, is essential to salvation, and ought to have stood foremost in their earliest publications, and been prominent in all. Was this declaring "the whole counsel of God"? Was this fidelity to their Master and to the souls of men?

Could you, or any Trinitarian minister, pursue a similar course, without being self-condemned? The Godhead of Christ is eminently a doctrine which disallows of compromise. With honest men, it is either sedulously enforced or it is disbelieved. Could three Trinitarians be found, who would write lives of Christ which might circulate where no supplementary document perhaps would ever follow, and yet not inculcate this tenet? No, sir; they have too much fidelity to what they deem important truth. I answer, then, to your exposition of parts of this gospel, that I believe in the integrity of the apostles and evangelists.

5. If the history were written of a preacher who, having been educated a Unitarian, became a Trinitarian, the period of his conversion would be strongly marked. But with expositors of your sentiments it has always been found most difficult to assign any period at which the deity of Christ might be reasonably supposed to have been revealed to the apostles. If that period be fixed after the resurrection, then it is clear that the passages most relied upon to prove the doctrine were understood by them in a different sense. If before, then the conduct of the apostles appears most unaccountable, for they exhibit nothing of the change of manner towards their Master which so extraordinary a communication must necessarily have produced. You have chosen the earlier period, with all its difficulties. The scribes and you find the deity of Christ where apostles missed it. But this is not the whole of the difficulty. We read much of John and the other apostles in the gospels; much of them also in the Acts. There is no chasm in the history. If the former do not indicate the mighty change in them which such a revelation should have produced, it ought to be plainly visible in the latter. Is it so? Did they, with all the fervour of converts, begin, on the descent of the Spirit, to preach this new doctrine of another Divine Person besides the Father? No. They preached "Jesus of Nazareth, a man approved of God," "a prophet like unto Moses;" and John joins with the rest in twice calling Jesus the "Servant of God" (your translators have softened the term to "*child*"), in an act of devotion which was followed by a miracle (Acts iv. 27, 30).

We have the record not only of their discourses, but of

their persecutions. They were charged with heresy, sedition, blasphemy; and it was even alleged as an offence that "they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection from the dead;" but they were not accused of *idolatry*. Had they taught your doctrine, they could not have escaped this charge. It would have been the most advantageous ground for their accusers to take, and would have fixed the deepest odium upon them in the minds of the people. Nothing but a proof, satisfactory to their judges, of the identity of Jesus and Jehovah, could have saved them from the penalties of the Mosaic code. That such an accusation was never even glanced at is a difficulty not easily solved unless they were Unitarians. This conclusion acquires additional strength from their joining in the synagogue and temple services, and also from the total absence of any controversy between them and the unbelieving Jews as to the proper object of worship—a controversy which must have immediately arisen had the one party been Unitarian and the other Trinitarian. They both worshiped the same Divine Person as the Only God; Jehovah and the Father were one.

6. Your evidence is *inferential* and *hypothetical*. On such a subject it is not unreasonable to expect that it should be direct and positive. We cannot properly call that a revealed truth which is only gathered by induction. The premisses may claim that appellation, but not the conclusion. You do not find, in the gospel of John, the terms Trinity, God the Son, God the Holy Ghost; nor the proposition that the divine and human natures were united in the person of Christ; but you find some things ascribed to him which belong to humanity, and other things which, as you think, belong to Deity; and you *infer*, somewhat hastily in my opinion, that, to reconcile these passages, he must be God and man in one person. This is your hypothesis (nothing more) to remove a supposed difficulty. And it is a very objectionable hypothesis, because—1, if true, it is so important that it must have been expressly stated; 2, it is unscriptural—the mere invention of theologians to reconcile, as they imagine, passages which are otherwise discordant; 3, it is unnecessary, as the loftiest terms of dignity applied to Christ may be shown to belong to his office, not to his nature; 4, it is complicated, hard to understand, and creates

more difficulties than it dispels; and 5, it is altogether inadequate to its professed object, for much of the strongest language concerning Christ evidently refers to him as a man, and many of the clearest declarations of his inferiority to the Father are connected with him in the highest character which he bears. Thus "flesh," or Christ as a human being, was the Word (i. 14); as a man he was preferred before and was before John the Baptist (i. 30); as the Son of Man he came down from heaven (iii. 13); and was the object of saving faith (iii. 14, 15); and had authority to execute judgment (v. 27); and had God for his Father (viii. 28); and as a man he told the truth which he had heard of God (viii. 40); and as the Son of Man he was glorified (xiii. 31, 32). These being the privileges conferred upon him in his human nature, there can be no occasion for the hypothesis of his divine nature to account for any thing else which is ascribed to him. According to the apostle John, humanity was compatible with the Saviour's highest dignities.

On the other hand, I submit the following propositions from the gospel of John, in which either the epithet "Son," which you regard as a divine title, expressive of the Godhead of Christ, or the connection of the passages referred to, shows that he is spoken of, or speaks, in his most exalted capacity. They demonstrate his inferiority in that capacity to the Father, and consequently that the Father alone is the Supreme Deity.

1. The Son is a distinct person, not merely from the Father, but from God: i. 18, xi. 4, xiv. 1.

2. The Father is the only true God: xvii. 3.

3. The Father was the God of the Jews: viii. 54.

4. The Father is greater than all: x. 29.

5. The Father is the object of worship to the true worshipers: iv. 23.

6. The Father is greater than the Son: xiv. 28.

7. The Father is the God of the Son; xx. 17.

8. The Son forbade prayer to himself, and directed it to be offered to the Father: xvi. 23.

9. The Son prayed to the Father: (for miraculous power) xi. 22, 41, 42: (for salvation from death) xii. 27: (for the promotion of the Father's glory by his sufferings) xii. 27, 28: (for the gift of the Holy Spirit) xiv. 16: (for his own glorification, and for the safety, sanctification, and harmony of his followers) xvii.

10. The Son did his works in his Father's name, and by his Father's power: x. 25, xiv. 10.

11. The Father commanded the Son: x. 18, xiii. 49, 50, xiv. 31, xv. 10.
12. The Father protected the Son: viii. 29, xvi. 32.
13. The Son can do nothing of himself: v. 19, 30.
14. The Son refers to the tribunal of the Father as a superior Judge: v. 45.
15. The Father gave the Son: iii. 16, iv. 10, vi. 32, 33.
16. The Father sent the Son: iii. 17, viii. 16, x. 36.
17. The Father bestowed all needful powers on the Son: iii. 35, xvii. 2, 7.
18. Christ did the will of a Superior, and had an assigned task: iv. 34, v. 36, vi. 38, viii. 29.
19. The Father instructed the Son: v. 20, viii. 28, 38, 40.
20. The Father inspired the Son: iii. 34, xiv. 10, 24.
21. The Father sanctified the Son: x. 36.
22. The Father authorised the Son to judge: v. 22, 27.
23. The Son died: x. 15, 17.
24. The Father gave the Son his glory: xvii. 22.
25. The Father gave the Son to have life in himself: v. 26, vi. 57.
26. The Father gave the Son his disciples: vi. 37, 39, 44, 65, xiv. 2, 6, xviii. 9.
27. The Son imparted to the disciples all things that he had heard of the Father: xv. 15.
28. The relation of the Son to the Father was similar to that of the disciples to the Son: xiii. 20, xiv. 20, xv. 9, 10, 15, xvii. 22, xx. 21.
29. The Son and Christians bear the same relation to our common God and Father: xx. 17.

These propositions, together with others which have occurred in the course of my examination of your arguments, are amply sufficient to redeem my pledge, at the commencement of this Letter, for the production of *positive evidence* that the apostle John was a Unitarian. In this more has been done than was absolutely necessary, for the *onus probandi* lies on you; and unless the doctrine of the Trinity be clearly proved, that of the Divine Unity remains, in all its simplicity and grandeur, the doctrine of the Evangelist, the doctrine of Christianity and of Judaism, of reason an dof revelation.

The summary which you have given of the doctrines taught in the Epistles of John contains nothing inconsistent with Unitarianism, except your interpretation of 1 Epist. v. 20: "We know that the Son of God is come, and hath given us an understanding, that we may know Him that is true, and we are in Him that is true, *even* in his Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life."

The word *even* is put by the translators in italics, as an addition of their own. "Him that is true," designates God, as you allow (p. 76), and who is plainly distinguished from "his Son Jesus Christ," in the first part of the verse. Does the conclusion confound them, and assert their common Deity? No, for then it should be, *These* are the true God, *i. e.* these *two* are the *one* God. Does it refer to Christ exclusively? That would shut out the true Godhead of the Father; it would make the writer assert that the only person who was the true God was the Son of God, *i. e.* that God was his own Son. By referring the pronoun *this* to God, to him that is true, we reconcile the passage with common sense, with the Divine Unity, with the sole deity of the Father, and with the tenor of the scriptures. Christ is the nearest antecedent; but so he is in 2d Epist. ver. 7. "Many deceivers are entered into the world, who confess not that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh. *This* is a deceiver and an antichrist." Unless the pronoun *this* be connected with the remoter antecedent, Christ is certainly called "God," in the one case, and as certainly called "a deceiver" in the other. The Son of God was neither.

As you have concluded your Lectures with a citation from the Epistles of John, allow me to close my reply with one from the Revelation. This book represents Christ in his glorified state, but still inferior to the Father, receiving homage as the slain Lamb, not as God, and unfolding futurity, not by a natural prescience, but as the recompense of his sufferings. It is "the revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto him;" and who can give a revelation to the Omniscient? At its commencement, Christ is called an angel, or messenger: "And he (God) sent and signified it by his angel unto his servant John." The narrative shows that it was "signified" to John by Christ himself. The same term (which is also given to the ministers, or agents, of the seven Asiatic churches) is applied to Christ in the last chapter, as well as in other parts of the book. In that chapter but one speaker is introduced, and from vers. 6-19 is one speech, only interrupted by the action of John and its reproof, vers. 8, 9, on which occasion the formula, "he saith unto me, occurs," and it is repeated on the resumption of the principal topic, in ver. 10. This

speaker was Jesus Christ. He names himself in ver. 16; he declares the approach of his coming, in the same terms, in vers. 7, 12, and 20; and in ver. 8, John proffered a homage to him which was too closely allied to Divine worship for his acceptance. Then was it that he said, "See thou do it not; for I am thy fellow-servant, and of thy brethren the prophets, and of them which keep the sayings of this book: WORSHIP GOD."

That you, sir, and all your parishioners, may have grace to respect the prohibition, as well as to obey the injunction, thus solemnly delivered, is the fervent wish of

Yours respectfully,

W. J. FOX.

DALSTON, *May* 17*th*, 1823.

THE

SPIRIT OF UNITARIAN CHRISTIANITY.

A Sermon delivered at the opening of the Finsbury Unitarian Chapel, on Sunday, February 1, 1824: *to which is prefixed an Address delivered on laying the first stone of the Chapel, on Thursday, May* 22, 1823.

[1824.]

AN ADDRESS, &c.

"There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time."

In this faith, in the belief of this, the genuine Apostles' Creed, we commence the erection of a Christian temple for the worship of the Universal Parent.

It well describes the great outline of our opinions, and strongly marks their peculiarities.

The sole object of our adoration is "The Lord that maketh all things; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone; that spreadeth abroad the earth by himself:" of whom Moses proclaimed to an assembled nation, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord:" of whom prophets announced that "his name should be one in all the earth:" to whom Christ prayed as "the only true God:" and of whom apostles declared, "To us there is but one God, the Father."

His is the supremacy, not only of power, but of wisdom and benevolence. He is light; he is love; he is the Father of all. "There is none good," in the noblest sense, "but one, that is God." "Of him, and through him, and to him, are all things." No malignant being contests with him the empire of creation. No subordinate deity, no equal partner, intercepts the homage of our hearts in its passage to his throne, or claims, with us, the merit of moving him to mercy.

Jesus of Nazareth, the brother of the human race, was made by him both Lord and Christ, and sent to reconcile

the world unto himself by dispelling men's ignorance, turning them from their iniquities, assuring them of immortality, and forewarning them of that awful day when God shall judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath appointed.

He ransomed us, by his exertions, sufferings, and resurrection—not from our heavenly Father, for we need no deliverance from his hands; to be in them is our safety, joy, and hope—but from the bondage of doubt, idolatry, and vice. And thus he ransomed all: for his religion, the truth of nature, confirmed, illustrated, and extended by revelation, is pursuing its predicted course to universal empire here; and scripture testifies that, ultimately, the whole creation shall be made free with the glorious liberty of the sons of God.

May the building which we raise be as a fortress for the defence of these simple, holy, and animating truths! Here, in their behalf, may we buckle on the whole armour of God, and go forth to the righteous conflict which we have to sustain! For ours is a state of warfare—of warfare with the *corruption* that makes religion the drudge of worldly policy; with the *spiritual tyranny* that demands the prostration of the understanding at its feet, and would bind the free men of Christ in the fetters of human creeds; with the *scepticism* that would quench the torch that alone can light us through the shades of death; with the *prejudice* that doubts whether any good thing can come out of the Nazareth of Unitarianism; with the *credulity* that, for the simple faith and worship of the gospel, receives a system at which "reason stands aghast, and faith herself is half confounded;" with the *bigotry* that, reversing the miracle proposed to Christ, transforms the bread of life itself into stones wherewith to wound or slay the brother who offends by diversity of opinion; and with the *superstition* which makes faith or ceremony, instead of holiness, the passport to future blessedness. With these we wage an everlasting conflict, and the prize of our victory is the emancipation of the human race.

I said *warfare*—it is with systems, not with persons. To the most mistaking man alive, we owe a brother's love; to his errors, nothing. We use no unhallowed arms. By argument and persuasion only would we prevail. The

calumny, the anathema, the penalty, the dungeon, are weapons which we leave to others, and only leave because we cannot wrest them from their grasp, to break and bury in oblivion.

May this building prove an asylum for the wretched!

Here may the ignorant, the poor, the friendless, seek the God of light and consolation, "whose tender mercies are over all his works," and whom they shall not seek in vain!

Here may the child of sorrow drink of the waters of life, and renew his strength, and behold bright glimpses of Almighty love beaming athwart the clouds that overshadow the path of his pilgrimage, and look through the mist of tears to the lovely regions of immortality!

Here may the wanderer, entangled in the wilderness of doubt and error, hail the day-spring on high of Christian truth, and regain the path of peace, and find rest unto his soul!

Here may the victim of fanaticism, the slave of terror, learn to think better of his God; and as he beholds the caprice and vengeance which he has ascribed to the Deity —to his own dismay and despair—fading before the mild glories of paternal love, may he receive, "not the spirit of bondage again to fear, but the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father!"

The members of the society in whose name I am speaking have a still nearer personal interest in the future employment of the edifice now commenced. It will be to them a school of mutual improvement, of preparation for the nobler occupations of a celestial mansion.

To stimulate inquiry, diffuse information, and guide in the pursuit of truth; to cultivate that devotion, simple yet fervent, and that morality, strict yet benevolent, by which Christianity is characterised; to strengthen its motives and brighten its hopes in their own bosoms; to train their youth in the way in which they should go, and make the hoary head a crown of glory, and build up one another in their most holy faith, on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone,—these are the honourable, useful, all-important views which they have in this undertaking.

May the holy train of Christian graces—*Sympathy*

wiping away the tears of grief, *Patience* bowing meekly to the will of Heaven, *Devotion* holding high communion with the Omnipresent, *Gratitude* faithfully and deeply tracing the record of bounties, *Resignation* looking from the grave with tearful eye to heaven, *Integrity* moving along her narrow path with fixed eye and undeviating step, and *Charity* with glowing heart and liberal hand—hither repair, and here make their permanent abode!

Hearers of Winchester, who yet survive, and in whose hearts and eyes the animation of youth rekindles when you remember how that apostle of benevolence came, proclaiming "God is love," and tracing that principle, with glowing eloquence, to its glorious results: hearers of Vidler, to whom his clear and nervous reasoning first demonstrated the kindred truth that God is one, and who will long mournfully cherish the remembrance of his vigorous mind,—you have seen, in the indication which this event affords of the progress to maturity of the society whose infancy they cherished, and in the evidence which every day affords of the wide diffusion of their principles and ours, a sight which would have gladdened them, and in the enjoyment of which we are entering into their labours. This day be their memory blessed! You are about to follow them. All of us must soon pass away, and other generations shall succeed us here; but may the same spirit blend together all the successive generations that shall raise on this spot the voice of praise and supplication, animating them with the like ardour for truth and righteousness; uniting them in love and good works; surrounding them with a bright atmosphere of usefulness on earth; and preparing them ultimately to shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of our Father!

And O thou Lord of heaven and earth, Father of the human race, who didst send thy Son Jesus Christ to bless us and all mankind, grant that here men may long call on thy name, in spirit and in truth, to thy glory and their salvation. Send forth thy light and thy truth unto all nations. "Let thy work appear unto thy servants, and thy glory unto their children. And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us: and establish thou the work of our hands upon us: yea, the work of our hands establish thou it." Amen.

A SERMON, &c.

Sacred be this building to the worship of the only God, the Father of Jesus Christ our Lord, his Father and our Father, his God and our God!

May His almighty blessing attend the services which shall be conducted within these walls, rendering them effective for the promotion of an enlightened faith in Christianity, sincere and constant obedience to its precepts, and the full enjoyment of its consolations!

And may those by whose exertions, and primarily for whose accommodation, this chapel has been erected, behold, in their own moral improvement, and in the conversion of others to the genuine gospel, the work of the Lord prospering in their hands!

"Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Romans viii. 9).

On laying the first stone of this chapel, to the completion of which a kind Providence has sustained us, I stated the leading principles of our religious system, which are three: 1st, the doctrine of the *Divine Unity:* that there is one being or person, the Father, who alone is God, and to be adored; and whose dominion is sole, absolute, and universal. 2dly, that of the *Humanity of Christ;* that Jesus, the Messiah, the Messenger of the covenant, the author of our faith, the first-born from the dead, was of the human race, and like unto his brethren. And 3dly, that of the *Final Restoration;* that the dispensation of grace with which his name is indissolubly connected, and which chiefly consists of the results of his teaching, sufferings, and resurrection, shall terminate in saving all that was lost, and in bringing every rational creature to goodness and happiness; or, to repeat the summary in the appropriate and emphatic language of Paul, "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." The first of these doctrines gives us the title of Unitarians, and there are some most worthily bearing that name who dissent from the other two; but they are generally held amongst us; they are only inferior to that in importance, and they are so intimately connected with it, and so influ-

ential, especially the last, upon our minor speculations and our religious feelings, as fairly to entitle them to a place even in this brief confession. So combined, then, let them stand, as an honest and full reply to the stranger within our gates, who may properly demand what we are, and why we separate from others. He will at once see that we *cannot* worship at altars raised to a plurality of divine persons, or regard in any other light than as gross corruptions of the gospel the deification of Jesus of Nazareth, and the denunciation of endless vice and misery against a large portion, or any portion, of mankind; he will also perceive that our dissent is on scriptural principles, and our creed a scriptural and apostolic creed. This position might be further illustrated, were it needful to repeat what is already, at your request, before the public, by showing how of every doctrine which we hold the assertion may be made, and of every doctrine which we deny the contradiction offered, in the plain words of scripture.

This claim will not, I apprehend, be made, or if made, cannot be supported by any other denomination of Christians. But there is another mode of viewing the difference between us and them, for which the present occasion is a proper and favourable opportunity. I mean not the diversity of doctrines between the Trinitarian and Unitarian systems, but of spirit, and the greater congeniality of the latter with that of the New Testament. All Christians found their faith upon the scriptures; but not only do they assign various and even opposite meanings to particular passages,—they differ also as to the passages which they select as containing the primary truths of the gospel, and in harmony with which others, deemed less clear, must be expounded; in the frequency with which doctrines, believed alike by all, are advocated, and in the degree of importance and prominence ascribed to such doctrines in their system; and consequently in the practical bearing and tendency of the whole. This diversity is promoted by the fact, that in the New Testament itself the doctrines of Christianity cannot be said to occupy a space in exact proportion to their intrinsic importance and permanent relation to each other; much of it being occupied with local and temporary controversies, which compelled the writers to insist more on particular topics, in the way of explanation and proof, than

they would have done had their task been only to teach truth without reference to existing and opposing error. Every tenet, for instance, bearing on the right of Gentiles to equal religious privileges with the Jews was, in consequence of the dispute on that subject, appealed to, asserted and reasserted, and dwelt upon with a fulness and earnestness which, if continued after that controversy became defunct, would exhibit a very disproportionate picture of Christianity. For this, therefore, allowance should be made in our study of the New Testament. Allowance should also be made, in reviewing modern systems of theology, for the occasional prominence of subjects in controversy beyond their natural rank of importance in the system to which they belong. This being done, we may fairly come to the question of which has most of the spirit of Christ or Christianity; and of systems, as of persons, may justly conclude, that where that is wanting, and in proportion as it is wanting, the system is none of his. Into that question I shall only enter so far as to attempt a delineation of the spirit of original Christianity, and show the affinity, or rather identity, with it of that of modern Unitarianism.

1. Christianity was eminently a system of *piety*, and produced the constant and universal recognition of a God in human affairs. Its votaries endured as seeing him who is invisible; in him they lived and moved and had their being; and they felt, as well as believed, that of him, and through him, and to him are all things. This shines conspicuous through all the diversity of their characters, circumstances, and histories. Whatever their path of life, they walked with God; and whether evil or good, they saw him in every thing, and every thing in him. Such is the natural result of Unitarian principles; they embrace whatever is most favourable to this habit of the mind, and they reject the tenets which tend to limit or enfeeble it. According to them, evil, natural and moral, is part of the Divine plan, and not an innovation on that plan, or its defeat. We are not driven to account for its introduction by the agency of a malignant spirit, whose becoming so remains as much a mystery as that which he is introduced to solve, and only removes the difficulty a single step; who is its author and preserver, and commenced his hostility to

the Deity so mightily that he, as many devoutly sing, "in one hour spoiled six days' labour of a God;" who has achieved and exercises an undefined but vast dominion in the worlds of matter and of mind; and who, in that final defeat which is anticipated, will yet drag myriads down with him to his own flaming pit, and "point at them for his" through all eternity. Where others see his works, we see the works of God. In our view, there is not an evil as well as a good Deity, and an evil as well as a good Providence, struggling in fearful conflict, not indeed of equal strength, but the feebler amply sufficient for the destruction of millions of our race: we acknowledge but one God and one Providence, and both benignant. To these we ascribe all beings and all events; and the God in whose hands our breath is, and whose are all our ways, we desire at all times to glorify. Nor is ours the confused and divided piety which renders supreme homage to three co-equal persons. The first promulgators of our religion had evidently in their devout effusions reference to but one presiding mind. They mention subordinate benefactors as well as the Supreme, but there was only one Supreme to whom they ascribed primarily every good gift. If of a supposed plurality of divine persons, the character, actions, and designs are precisely the same, and they always proceed conjointly, there is still the evil of perplexity in worship, and of offering, in equal portions, to several those emotions which are, undivided, a far nobler sacrifice to One: and if they be varied, as is the case in some measure in the Trinitarian scheme, there is the greater evil of regarding them with different feelings, of rendering to each an imperfect homage, which might be increased did its object possess the qualities or pursue the course of the others, and thus, in fact, the danger of having no object of supreme and unbounded devotion at all. The union of qualities which they distribute, the concentration of emotions which they scatter, and the adoration in one divine Person of all which they ascribe to three, is the work of Unitarianism; and the result is a closer approach to that Christian piety which loves the Lord our God with all the heart and soul, the mind and strength.

Faith was the great excellence, the vital principle, of the characters which sacred history has preserved for our imi-

tation. That they lived in faith, made their lives admirable, and that they died in faith, was the blessedness of their memories. Strong are the praises bestowed by the sacred writers on this quality, noble the virtues which they ascribe to its influence, and manifold the blessings which they promise to its exercise. Oh, the abuse of words, the tricks put on men's minds by varying the meaning of terms, or keeping out of sight the variations of their meaning! and the incalculable mischief which has resulted from this perversion!

The primary meaning of faith, in the scriptures, is what we call fidelity, or faithfulness; from which it easily came to signify that confidence or trust which is generated by assurance of the fidelity of another, from whom we have received the promise of any particular good, and which, where there has been no specific promise, may yet arise from a conviction of benignity of character, kindness of purpose, and power of execution, in its object. By a further change, on a very obvious principle, it would be applied to credence in the declarations of its object, to the declarations themselves, and to the results of their reception. These applications, and one or two others of a similar description, undoubtedly occur in the later and more controversial of the works which constitute the Bible; but they were only applications: and confidence in a faithful or a benignant God is the distinctive faith of revealed religion.

If the scriptures indeed spoke of faith in the sense which is now so prevalent; if they described by it a string of propositions, or that credence in such propositions which is an involuntary and merely intellectual act, and at the same time treated it as voluntary, ranked it above all moral qualities, and annexed heaven to its exercise, and endless hell to its absence,—then would a more formidable objection be made out against Christianity than sceptic has ever devised, and a more fatal accusation be substantiated against its influence than enemy has ever advanced. That Christians have, if not asserting it in terms, yet practically adopted and acted on the assumption that the mere belief of propositions is a voluntary and meritorious act, is perhaps the direst error into which they have fallen: it has raised the greatest obstacles to the attainment of truth; it has had the most pernicious effect on morals; and it has been the very

hot-bed of bigotry and persecution. That faith of which scripture speaks so highly as a moral quality, of which it records and to which it promises so much, is faith in the sense of trust or confidence,—confidence in God, filial confidence; of course often showing itself by confidence in his commissioned messengers, and especially in his Son, Jesus Christ; and never, in such connections, a creed, or the mental reception of a creed. Now, this confidence Unitarianism preëminently inspires. No existing theological system lays for it so firm and broad a basis. It commands all men to have faith, or full and filial confidence in God, by assuring all that God is their Father. It declares, that his love to them is as unbounded as his power, and as eternal as his nature. As it resolves all things into his will, so it resolves his will into the dictates of Almighty benevolence. Every thing is of him, and for good to all. How can it be the duty of every man to have filial faith in God, if it be the lot of any man not to have in him a Father, not to be the object of his love, and not to escape, through all the ages of eternity, the agonising inflictions of his unrelenting and vindictive justice? "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him," is rational; for after death may come abundant compensation; but though he eternally torment me, or any, "yet will I trust in him," is a sentiment from which my heart recoils: and, if I greatly err not, most recoils when most under the influence of Christian feeling. If there be a doctrine which is deadly to faith, in the scriptural sense, that is the doctrine. If there be a system formed to produce faith, in that sense, in the highest degree, and to the widest extent, Unitarianism, as inclusive of final restoration, is that system.

Were this notion of faith kept in mind, we should hear no more of that presumed discrepancy between faith and reason, about which so much has been said both by believers and by unbelievers. It destroys the possibility of their clashing, or coming into contact. It shows how both may be exercised to the greatest extent, in the most perfect harmony.

What confused language have theologians held about their distinct provinces, and where the one is bounded by the other! How variously have they fixed the barrier at which the exercise of reason is to end, and that

of faith to begin! Some say the former is properly employed in estimating the evidences of the books of scripture, but, their genuineness being ascertained, it must receive implicitly every sentence of their contents. Others allow a little more latitude, and permit its agency to determine the meaning of what must be believed. A further step is taken by Paley, and those who think with him, that where the sacred writers have argued any point, reason may decide upon, and even reject, their arguments, but when this is done, must still receive their conclusions unquestioned, by whatever means arrived at. Now, all these positions are pressed by the same difficulty. If reason judge of the genuineness of an epistle or gospel, why not of its contents? If of the meaning of a sentence, why not of its truth? If of the validity of an argument, why not of the justice of the conclusion? All go on the notion of something in faith to limit reason: a doctrine incompatible with the scripture doctrine of faith, and not defensible if that term be taken as descriptive of revelation itself, or of its belief.

It is conceded, nay, rather, it is matter of accusation against Unitarianism, that it extends the province of reason beyond the point where other systems have placed its bounds. They spare us proof, and make a charge of that which else we might well labour to establish as an honourable distinction. They do not, in this instance, misrepresent us so much as they misrepresent Christianity. Revelation is not an apparatus for limiting reason. Its design and tendency and result were to call reason into exercise, enlarge its sphere, and invigorate its powers. What does the Bible contain that is supernatural? Facts: the call of Abraham, the deliverance and organisation of Israel, the resurrection of Christ, &c. Facts, from which reason makes the deductions that constitute religious truth. It taught truth originally, and should teach it now, by the agency of reason. It nowhere gives abstract propositions for implicit belief. It has nothing analogous to the creeds of modern times and churches. How were the Jews taught the omnipotence of Jehovah? By the fact that neither the armies nor the gods of Egypt or Canaan could prevent their emancipation and settlement. How were they taught his omnipresence? By finding, as in the case of

Jonah, that wherever they fled, they escaped not from that presence. Providence ordained the events and prepared the pupils, so that their reason, operating on those events, arrived at the great truths which we call doctrines of revelation; which, as men would not have known without Divine interposition, so neither could they have known without the exercise of reason. Revelation was the nurse of reason. What ordinary events are to natural religion, extraordinary events are to Christianity: they are only different volumes for reason to study in, and from which it rises with the important acquisition of religious truth. Hence the argumentative character of the scriptures, which, on other hypotheses, is totally inexplicable. Here Unitarianism is in unison with the Bible, and in contrast with other systems, which, setting out with an unwarrantable restriction, have proceeded to create other restrictions by elevating the authority of interpretations or of priests, till reason has only been exhibited crippled and fettered, and dragged along after the triumphal chariot of a creed.

Christianity was a system of *liberty and liberality;* it was so as distinguished from Judaism, and Judaism was so as distinguished from at least the established forms of Christianity in modern times. No country has ever enjoyed more religious liberty than Judæa. Under its theocratical government certain religious offences took, of necessity, the character of political crimes, and were visited with punishment. Even in this we shall see no violence to conscience, if we consider the general mode of thinking in those times; for the idolater, believing that each country had its tutelary god, could not deny that Jehovah was the Lord of Israel, and entitled to reverence and submission within its confines. In all else, theoretically and practically, the widest latitude of opinion was allowed, and that without any drawback of even the most trifling civil rights. They had no established creed, no Test Acts, no laws against opinions. Pharisees and Sadducees, the extreme sects of a later period of their history, and than which Europe scarcely presents wider extremes, mingled indiscriminately in the Sanhedrim, and arrived alternately at the high-priesthood. Christianity came not to abridge this freedom. It neither abrogated the obligation, nor disproved the justice, nor changed the policy, of this principle of government.

Its apostles went not to priests or rulers to deposit in their hands a direction or permission from heaven for forging and imposing a yoke which neither themselves nor their fathers had ever borne. Its founder did not proclaim that he came to bind those who were free, and to preach a year of jubilee, not for slaves, but for tyrants, when, instead of universal emancipation, there should be a universal return to vassalage. Its converts were invited to own no master but Christ, and him only on personal conviction of his authority from God. This made them Christians, and gave them all Christian privileges and equal rights. They were then free men of Christ, whose disposition was to "give place by subjection, no, not for an hour," to imposers of either faith or ceremony. For admission to their churches, for the hope of admission to heaven itself, this was their law, that "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved;" while for those without, its language was, that "the Son of Man was not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them;" that those "who had not the law were a law unto themselves," and that "in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him."

Such was the spirit of Christianity. Of what systems is it the spirit now? Of those which pile together multifarious and mysterious creeds, and call them essentials of Christianity; which, by incorporating these creeds in their religious services, do all that in them lies to exclude those who adhere to Christian simplicity from the public worship of their common God; which, with almost pagan inconsistency, prohibit any one's commemorating with them the death of Christ unless he believe the eternal deity of Christ; which deny not only Christian fellowship, but the Christian name, to those who have every scriptural claim to its best privileges, and who have both defended the gospel by their writings and adorned it by their lives, because they receive not their mysteries; which denounce endless punishment, not only against those who may fear God and work righteousness without Christianity, but against those who fear God and work righteousness by the very power of faith in Christ, provided it be not their sort of faith, or their notion of Christ; which reckon for nothing the New-

Testament confession of his authority, unless it be followed by the submission of reason or practice to *their* authority; which eagerly grasp at political influence and national wealth, and become the ready machinery of oppression, and raise distinctions and pronounce exclusions in societies where all have equal rights; and crush the civil liberties of others, even if it be by the sale or sacrifice of their own, and change the safeguards of property and freedom into the mere fortresses of a peculiar faith, and make those who differ pay the refuters of their own opinions and the monopolisers of their own inheritance, and, if they have abandoned the illustration of the stake, still employ the dark demonstration of the dungeon? Whose image and superscription is this? Cæsar's it may be; for it is not of Christ. Pagan theology and worldly ambition have too much leavened modern Christianity; but not the whole mass. However other systems may divide among themselves these evils, in them Unitarian Christianity has no portion. Our faith and worship are simple, and not exclusive; we love goodness wherever found, and think that it is loved, and will be rewarded, by the Judge. The apostolic test of Christianity is ours: and perish our defence, perish our hopes of success, should one or the other ever involve any infringement of the rights of conscience, or of any other rights, or any violation of the dictates of Christian liberty and liberality!

The spirit of Christianity is a spirit of *holiness*. All the power of its doctrines, prophecies, miracles, precepts, and promises is directed to the promotion of morality. The Saviour sacrificed himself to redeem us from all iniquity. Unitarianism adopts, without reservation, modification, or addition, the New-Testament accounts of the day of judgment, which uniformly represent men's moral character as deciding their destiny. It holds forth no immunity to that faith in a vicarious satisfaction which most other systems make the only availing plea in that awful day. It allows none of those excuses for sin which arise from a supposed total depravity of nature. It forbids any waiting for supernatural influences to enable men to do their duty. It has no royal road of instantaneous regeneration from the death-bed of iniquity to the gates of paradise. I believe there is not, and never has been, any religion that so frequently, so

decidedly, so powerfully, as Unitarian Christianity, holds up the connection of happiness with virtue, and of misery with vice, unweakened by any modification about belief or ceremony, and standing alone in broad characters, in all the supremacy of paramount importance.

Philanthropy may be regarded as having dawned upon the world in the instructions of Jesus of Nazareth. He made a common principle of what before was only an occasional sentiment. He bound men to each other's hearts, in spite of national and religious diversities, by a common origin, a common nature, and a common relation to the one God, their Almighty Father. That Father he imitated by feeling and inculcating universal love to man. One of these principles has become a distinguishing tenet of Unitarianism, to which other systems have abandoned the, to us, welcome task of proclaiming that God is, in the same sense, the Father of all, and consequently of putting in the strongest light the brotherhood of the human race. By whatever doctrine or hypothesis they limit or abrogate this principle,—by his supposed hatred to a portion of his rational creatures; by his eternal decree predestinating some to endless life, but others to endless misery; by his identifying the children of Adam with their transgressing parent, and therefore involving them, except the elect, in his wrath and curse; by his leaving some to the unaided workings of a nature supposed to be totally depraved, and only capable of producing guilt and wretchedness; by his not including them in the benefits of Christ's satisfaction, or of the regenerating influence of the Holy Spirit; by his seeing in them only fit subjects for the eternal visitations of his justice, and the display of his glory in their final ruin,—whatever modification be adopted, there cannot but result in the heart of man—unless he be driven to abhor, while he believes in, such a character of the Deity—a diminution of brotherly feeling towards some of the human race. But on whatever altar, and to whatever theological idol, bigotry would immolate this glorious truth, it is Unitarianism that rushes in between the priest and the victim, and stays the sacrifice, and saves from pollution the temple of Christianity. We approach not the throne of grace in the mockery of prayers for the salvation of all, which we know cannot and shall not be answered to

all eternity; we see not, in the wide world, a claimant on our sympathy and love who, as our faith tells us, is unpitied and unloved of our God; we behold not in human nature a loathsome mass of corruption which makes every thought a sin, and all, except our elect associates in the possession of supernaturally bestowed holiness, not fit to be loved, and scarcely fit to live; we look not for a heaven for ever exclusive; nor think to hear with delight, or with content, the honours of vindictive justice proclaimed in groans of hopeless anguish; nor expect that, as they burst from the hearts of the objects of our fondest attachment here, or of any fellow-creature, they will minister to the perfection of our happiness, or be consistent with its existence. And therefore we can love mankind with an unreservedness and fulness of emotion like that which glows in the New Testament; whose production by our system proclaims that, if the tree is judged by its fruit, Unitarianism is at least a scion of Christianity; and whose existence, whenever the happy inconsistency presents itself in connection with the theology we have adverted to, has the incongruous appearance of gathering grapes from thorns, and figs from thistles.

Judaism and Christianity were emphatically religions of *hope*. Their believers were always looking forward to something joyous in futurity; and their predictions had generally an expansive character, which refers their fulfilment not so much to a single event as to a series of events, of similar nature, each surpassing in splendour and gladness that which preceded it, till the oracle is fully accomplished in its most literal, which is also its most comprehensive, meaning. Their incipient, and then their crescent, realisation, gives strength to faith and that active energy which is so important to goodness, and scatter around multiplied consolations, and feed that eternal hope which it is so much blessedness to feel. The promise to Abraham, "that in his seed should all the families of the earth be blessed," is an illustrious instance of this kind. It had its first and lowest fulfilment when his posterity became a numerous, well-regulated, and comparatively enlightened nation in the midst of barbarous tribes. It had a yet better accomplishment when by their means, in captivity or commerce, a pure Theism was widely diffused over

the great empires of the East. In a larger sense was it realised in the mission of Christ, the descendant of Abraham, to proclaim glad tidings of great joy to all people. This illustration grew brighter in the rapid promulgation of his gospel, which went forth from Zion to many a nation, making Greek and Jew, barbarian and Scythian, bond and free, one in Christ Jesus. A nobler commentary is, we trust, preparing in the extension of Christianity, till it become the universal religion, and lead on the latter days of freedom and knowledge, peace and improvement; nor shall we have nothing more left to expect from it, taken either in the strictness of the letter or the benignant universality of its spirit, till we arrive at that felicitous consummation, of which all the rest are shadows, when every family shall be blessed, because every individual shall be blessed, and "God shall be all in all." Like the ladder which Jacob saw, its foot is on earth, but it reaches to heaven; every step gladdens the eye by an enlargement of the prospect; we ascend to higher blessings, and trace them as they flow over a wider space; till we rest in the presence of God, and behold the universe basking in his smile.

Many other predictive passages might be alleged, some pointing to the same final result, others stopping short of that, but all of similar tendency, affording constant nourishment to that brightening and boundless hope which the chosen messengers of God so strongly felt, and the excitement of which seems characteristic of divine revelation.

Unitarianism sustains this heavenly ministry. That which characterised Christianity among the superstitions of antiquity characterises her among the interpretations of Christianity. When others raise the song of hope, her voice is ever heard in unison; and when they suffer that strain to die away, or bring it to a dolorous close amid yells of agony and moanings of despair, she perseveres alone—alone but for a while; for her animating chant is the prelude to that swelling chorus when every creature in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, and in the sea, even all that are in them, shall ascribe blessing, and honour, and glory, and power to Him that sitteth on the throne and to the Lamb for ever.

Delineation, rather than argument, has been my object.

I wish to show what Unitarianism is, more completely than by a bare statement of our opinions; to make obvious, not merely its outward form and pressure, but its vital spirit; to show it as it exists, not only in the scriptures which we read, but in us when we are reading them; not only in our heads, but in our hearts; not only in our controversial, but in our devout moments; not only in our books, but in our lives. We thus give the inquirer as to what we wish him to think the additional and more important information of what we wish him to be. With our principles is combined a view of the dispositions they cherish and the character they form, whose worth is a practical test immediately of their excellence, and remotely of their truth.

Yes, a test indirectly of their truth—for we are reasoning on the assumption of the truth of Christianity; and if our doctrines generate the spirit of Christ, there is no slight presumption that they are his doctrines. The identity of the result is an argument for the identity of the means; an argument forcible in itself, but conclusive when, as in this case, there is independent evidence of the Christian character of those means, and of their prominence in the Christian system. That there is one God, and that God is love, is not more a Unitarian than a scriptural conviction; nor more in harmony with the spirit of the interpretation than with that of the text. We are strong in the plain and literal declarations of the New Testament; but we are yet stronger in the sameness of the *general impression* made by Christianity and Unitarianism as to the moral qualities with which these declarations are associated in the teacher's mind, and which they are designed to produce in the convert. The machinery is the same; the object the same; our system has the spirit of Christ, and is his; and Christianity is Unitarianism. And were it needful to illustrate this practically, not hard would be the task; for men who have had an abiding and universal sense of the divine presence, who have shown that God was in all their thoughts, and who seem to have made the very state of consciousness an act of adoration; men who with filial confidence could cast themselves on his protection, and obey the call of duty, though summoning to the bitterest sacrifices of fortune or of feeling, renouncing

every prospect for the testimony of a good conscience, and in reliance on his Providence; men who have developed the powers and asserted the rights of intellect, and won from philosophy her proudest trophies to cast them at the foot of the cross, and whose exalted talents and unshaken faith were an exhibition of the native affinity of reason and revelation; men who have raised the standard of religious freedom, and fought its battles, and suffered in its cause, and prompted its manly and generous assertion, not only for those who were like-minded with themselves, but on behalf of all, even though holding opinions the most remote, and mad with a bigoted hostility the most inveterate; men who, deeply impressed with the practical importance of their own tenets, could yet most readily allow and praise and love goodness in others, whatever they believed or whatever they rejected; men whose pure lives showed that, even if the head were wrong, the heart was right, and that, if doing Christ's will be building on a rock, they need not dread the storm come when it may; men who loved their neighbour as themselves, and felt the zeal of benevolence in all its energy, and were in doing good unwearied, and grappled man to their hearts with the affection of a brother; men who through life's changes, and in death's struggles, had hopes fixed on high, ever firm and glorious, drawing their souls to heaven to join the kindred society of the just made perfect, and to enjoy the full triumphs of that cause for which they combated, in the subjection of all enemies at the Saviour's footstool;—men such as these has no system done more honour to Christianity than Unitarianism by producing in comparative abundance. The descriptions will suggest to you names whose praise is in all our churches; nay, whose praise pervades our country, and beams forth beyond, even to the very boundaries of enlightened and civilised society.

Here be the tree planted that bears such fruit, and long may it flourish! for it is the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

In describing the spirit of your religion, and of its more illustrious ornaments, I have intimated your duty, and justified your conduct in the erection of this chapel for its profession and promulgation. Oh, walk ye worthy of your high vocation, and be your actions a living demonstra-

tion of the fidelity of the picture! No ampler vindication is needful for your thus coming forward, in the just exercise of your rights, to avow your principles, and invite others to their consideration, than the fact that those principles breathe the spirit of Christ. By the blessing of God, may your success in this righteous cause be proportionate, not to the feeble efforts of its present advocate, not to the power of your own combined zeal, but to its intrinsic goodness and public utility; for it is the cause of undefiled Christianity, it involves the interests of piety and morality, and its spread is that of Truth and Liberty and Happiness.

SERMON AT SETTLEMENT

OF REV. EDWARD TAGART, NORWICH.

[1825.]

"The labourer is worthy of his reward" (1 Tim. v. 8).

It would be difficult to find a case to which this general principle may be applied with greater justice than to that of the faithful minister of a dissenting and Unitarian congregation.

The discharge of the various duties which have been delineated* implies efforts of mind and body, public and private, extending themselves over the whole time, and tasking all the faculties of the individual on whom they are imposed. He can be no drone in society. The honourable appellation of *labourer*—and honourable it assuredly is with all correct minds, with all who connect utility and virtue with their notions of dignity—fairly belongs to him. And his toil has this further title to remuneration, that it is not only arduous in its nature and beneficial in its tendency, but is freely devolved upon him by others, who, by the very act of inviting him to the duty, pledge themselves to the bestowment of the recompense.

The very office is of their creation. For it is not, I apprehend, a law of revelation, though it was an early Christian practice, an apostolic practice, that some should be set apart as religious instructors. You deem it expedient that it should be so, and I think experience shows that you are right. Still it is your own uncompelled act. You not only create the office, but define its powers and duties. If not

* The previous part of the Service had consisted of an Introductory Prayer, by the Rev. W. P. Scargill, of Bury St. Edmunds; an Address, by Mr. Edward Taylor; a Reply thereto, by the Rev. Edward Tagart; and the Charge, by the Rev. William Turner, of York.

formally, this is at least done in fact, and the practical diversity includes all the intermediate degrees between a mere theological lecturer and the head of an organised society. And you also make choice of the individual to fill this station without the interference of any external, or the control of any superior, authority.

The worthiness of the labourer cannot be so powerfully urged where he is sent into the field by others. The obligations of the patron and the flock are blended in you, who have at once the privilege of instruction and the prerogative of nomination. A relation so completely spontaneous, in all its parts, from beginning to end, holds you by the strongest moral ties to the appropriate remuneration of your minister. What that is I have been requested, and shall attempt, to describe on the present occasion.

It is not the bestowment of independent property. Neither your contributions, your endowments, nor your pulpit, are a freehold. If any of them are made so, or ever attempted to be made so, by the agency of an imperfect legislation, it is by an analogy—which we disclaim—with the Established Church, and in direct violation of the principles on which we dissent from that church. The people's voice is the only tenure by which our ministers hold any thing which a congregation can bestow; and shame befall those who would infringe, though but a hair's breadth, upon this principle, or who would submit to such infringement. Neither does that remuneration consist in investiture with temporal or spiritual dignities. You do not make—as vocation to some nominally ecclesiastical stations strangely makes—a peer of parliament, a titled dignitary; and though custom may think to grace your ministers' names by the addition of "Reverend," that custom is deemed by many of us to be not less "honoured in the breach than in the observance." Nor is it any part of the proper reward of your minister that he should be a priest in fact, though not in name. For you to make him a priest—and he is nothing officially but what you make him—would be to benefit neither yourselves nor him. To his assumption, should he ever make it, which I am persuaded he will not, of aught that belongs to that designation, of official sanctity, of authoritative interpretation, of uncalled-for interference, I exhort you not to submit. The apostles were but servants of the churches, and no minis-

terial worth can merit the attributes of a spiritual dictatorship. And if not a priest, still less make him an idol. There are religionists whose devotion seems to consist in praising their minister rather than their God: and in admiring the beauty of his orations rather than in acquiring, and practically employing, sacred truth. The minister ill deserves praise who is greedy of it in any other form than that of the reception and influence of the doctrines he inculcates. The incense of flattery is apt to cloud his senses, and make him, not a rewarded labourer, but a spoiled child. Plaudits are the meed of actors, not of teachers. He who speaks to men as moral agents of their God, is most successful when *he* is least thought of, either by himself or by his auditory. But, not to dwell on negatives, the reward of one who labours in the ministry should be rendered by the congregation in pecuniary support, social kindness, serious attention, and zealous coöperation.

First, In pecuniary support. That a young man should devote himself to the dissenting ministry as a gainful profession, and sacrifice to it, as a promising worldly speculation, the time and expense of the requisite education, is scarcely to be supposed. It would argue either a lamentable ignorance of the real state of things, and be soon considered as a false step, which must be retrieved with all expedient haste, or else imply such an incapacity for success in the pursuit of wealth in other ways, and such a consequent degradation in the scale of intellect, as would be utterly incompatible with the acceptability of his services to any respectable and well-informed congregation. Our pulpits hold out no such temptations, and I trust they never will.

Our Lord's warning against hireling shepherds has been but too amply verified in the oppressions of his flock. The love of money may do much; it may inspire energy and skill and eloquence; but the essential qualities of a minister of religion never have been among its results, and never will, till men gather grapes of thorns, and figs of thistles. They are the fruits of a far nobler and purer principle. They require disinterestedness; they imply devotion and philanthropy.

But if it were egregious folly for a minister to anticipate the enriching of himself by his profession, it is but obvious and simple justice that he reckon upon a decent

maintenance. This is due in all cases; and the interest—I mean the kind of interest which belongs to the utility of the office—of the congregation is not less involved in it than that of the minister. What is the consequence of its neglect? If the minister be a man of private fortune, every deduction on that account is an addition to his influence in the affairs of the congregation; he becomes irresponsible; and at his death, or removal, a people unaccustomed to conduct their own concerns, and to contribute from their own resources, are but too likely to fall into a state of indifference or confusion, which may end in their complete dissolution. On the other hand, without such means, either his mind is continually harassed by the difficulty of his task, to provide things honest in the sight of all men,—a task which, if it prove not too hard for his integrity, may yet oppress his intellect, when it ought in all its force and clearness to be employed in its duties,—or he is driven to other occupations to eke out his scanty means, and comes to the pulpit, or to his preparation for it, with mind and body distracted, jaded, worn out, with only the dregs of his intellect to offer on that altar where he would willingly pour his noblest thoughts and feelings for a libation. A character well formed for ministerial usefulness may yet be little adapted to cope with difficulties and to make exertions of this kind. They are an unnatural struggle—a fight with enemies who use strange weapons; and it is well if he come out of the conflict unscathed in circumstances, reputation, peace of mind, or usefulness. Nor ought it to be required. A man does enough when he sacrifices for himself and family those earthly prospects which expand for others; and nothing short of positive inability on the part of the congregation, from poverty of circumstances or paucity of numbers, can justify their leaving him to do more.

I have spoken thus plainly upon this rather delicate topic, because it is of great general importance to our cause. There is too much of a compulsory secularisation in our ministry. Its full and undivided power is not directed to the destruction of anti-Christian error, and the revival of gospel truth. Men who might attain the most commanding influence in society, were their capabilities for public exertion fully developed, are obliged so soon to

turn their attention to education, or other means of actually supporting themselves, as to cramp their vigour and make them mere weekly sermon-readers, doing that with comparatively little efficiency, and doing nothing else for the promotion of genuine religion, either in or out of their own congregations. Congregations which cannot do more, had better call forth the talents of the best-instructed among themselves, and in the mean time unite, if possible, with others to support among them one who should be at once minister and missionary, his whole life and powers devoted to a single object, and by that singleness doing more for its advance than twenty who only bring to it a divided mind. Oh, there is that in Unitarian Christianity, to every mind which perceives its truth, and worth, and loveliness, and immense importance to human virtue and happiness; which knows the delightful consciousness of labouring, not unsuccessfully, under its impulse, turning men from the error of their ways, turning the superstitious to a rational piety, the bigoted to candour and brotherly love, sinners to righteousness, and the slaves of humanly-devised tyrants of creation to the adoration of the universal Father; which contemplates at once with regret approaching to anguish, and with a glowing impatience for exertion, the extensive regions over which error, ignorance, vice, and misery yet hold dominion;—there is that which makes the relinquishment, however partial, of its contemplation and service for temporal efforts after temporal good a distressing and unnerving change, a descent which burdens, cripples, and paralyses the soul. A better arrangement, without any such pressure as could be felt, perhaps even without any addition, would give us a body of ministers before whose exertions fanaticism would quail.

Secondly, The labours of the minister are rewarded in the social kindness of his congregation. Of this his situation gives him peculiar need. He does not usually live among the scenes and friends of his boyish days, or even among those of his riper years. Those who call him from them, on a public duty, should do their best to alleviate his private loss. Christ said that his mother, sister, and brethren were those who did his Father's will; and those who obey the precepts and enter into the spirit of the religion of Christ will be as friends and relatives to his

minister. The current of events, or rather their own selection, has thrown his happiness, so far as it depends upon society, into their hands. It is difficult to calculate the amount of enjoyment which they can impart, or of vexation which they can inflict. Much may depend upon the prudence of his conduct: at least as much upon the judicious kindness of theirs. Such kindness his labours deserve. All *should be* friends to their minister. But what proves them so?

He is not the friend of his minister who never intimates any failing, suggests any improvement, or proffers any useful information or advice, but pours incessantly the poison of flattery into his ear, until the appetite of his vanity grows with what it feeds upon, and he cannot endure the language of honest remonstrance; nor he who makes his own alleged frankness the plea for abrupt and rude vituperation, of ill-tempered and coarse, if not causeless, blame, rather the indulgence of his own mood than the kindly meant means of correction, and in manner incompatible with the courtesy of equals. He is not the friend of his minister who knows nothing more of him than what he sees and hears at chapel on Sunday, treating him with utter neglect or cold civility; nor he who would engross his society, and affect to be the medium of communication between him and others, and make him a party, not only to his own preferences, but to all his own aversions also; nor he who conveys to him whatever ignorance or carelessness or spite may utter of him in his absence; nor he who becomes the tale-bearer to him of others, the conduit of all local scandal. The connection of minister and people is formed for better things than these; or it were better not formed at all.

The hospitality which invites to that unbending of the mind which the very constitution of man requires after solitary, arduous, and continued intellectual pursuits; the sympathy which animates or consoles in those vicissitudes which may be expected in the public efforts of a minister, or those to which his personal lot is not less liable than that of others; the suggestions which experience and a larger and longer knowledge of the world may give, and of which the intrinsic value may be enhanced by the manner of their communication; the allowances and encourage-

ments which he may need in youth, the demonstrations of steady respect which should lighten—when they come upon him—the infirmities of age; the consistency of attention, which, while its diminution may mark what is wrong, or its particular increase be the meed of occasional merit, knows none of the waverings of caprice;—these are some of the indications of that spirit of friendship in which a faithful minister of religion deserves to be received and retained by a Christian congregation.

Thirdly, Your minister's reward consists in your serious attention. This presupposes that you do attend—I mean, in the lower sense of the word, that you are personally present; that you do not engage a minister or connect yourself with a place of worship merely to provide, in his oratory, amusement for those Sundays on which other amusements fail you, or other occupations. I am no Sabbatarian; but the religious employment of the Sunday is sanctioned by that strong moral expediency with which no good man will trifle. No light matter will prevent his assisting at public worship and instruction. Nor should it prevent his observing the decorum of the service by punctual attendance. The exalted piety or profound knowledge to which any portion may be unnecessary will, I think, be found the natural companion of the benevolence which would not obstruct, by interruption, the edification of the poorest, the youngest, or the most ignorant member of a congregation. Nor are the attainments *very* common which place their possessors above the reach of benefiting even by the effusions of minds of a much humbler order than their own.

Avoid indifference. There is a listlessness about some hearers which makes one wonder why they are hearers; and which, at any rate, keeps them from being more than *hearers*. The mechanical effect upon the tympanum of the ear seems all that is produced by the preacher's exertion, even when they keep awake. The moral result seems scarcely more than that of so many strokes upon any other drum. Surely, if ever the mind should be roused from an inert and passive state, if ever men should awaken their senses that they may the better judge, it is when they are addressed by one who reasons on righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come.

Avoid levity. The preacher is not worthy of his station if not also worthy of serious and earnest attention. He is not invited to become your butt or your buffoon. It is no light task for him to lead your devotions, to approach the throne of the eternal and omnipresent God with such prayers as your wants may need, and such praises as your blessings should excite. It is no light task for him to come forward from time to time with faithful admonition of your failings, with just delineation and enforcement of your duties, with appropriate consolation for your sorrows; to unfold the stores of natural and revealed truth on religion, and display the riches of the divine word in all the splendour of its facts and principles, from the beginning when God created the heavens and the earth, to the end when Christ delivereth up the kingdom to the Father, all spiritual enemies are subdued, and God is all in all; and not more misplaced in itself, not more profane in reference to the subjects of his ministration, or more lamentable as to the state of mind it shows in the scoffer than unjust towards him, is the perverted ingenuity that would here collect materials for a jest.

I say not that it is any part of a hearer's duty or a minister's recompense, that whatever he delivers should be implicitly received. And could a congregation be so servile and so senseless, the only proper use of this resignation of their understandings would be to enjoin their instant resumption, that they should of themselves judge that which is right.

But your investigation is due to what he advances, and your reception to what he proves.

It is for him to speak as to wise men, and for you to judge what he says. And it is as little as you can do, after the toil of his researches and investigation, and arrangement and preparation, to decide on the results, and thus consent to and aid in the process of freeing your minds from error, storing them with knowledge, and illumining them with truth.

This object is not less moral than intellectual. What is the end of our assembling, and reading, and preaching, and worshiping? Is it not the formation of the character in all Christian virtues, for usefulness here and felicity hereafter? Is not this the direct design of much that

you hear, and the indirect design of all? Be it then ever in your minds when you enter these walls. Take home to your own bosoms and lives every lesson of practical goodness. Furnish yourselves the application of your preacher's sermons; give a particular reference to what he can only state generally; prepare your minds by self-examination and private devotion for profiting by his public labours—on you it depends; and let them be, not the seed which perishes by the way-side, but that which, sown in a good and honest heart, brings forth a hundredfold the fruits of righteousness.

Fourthly, Reward your minister's labours by zealous coöperation. An obvious means of universal obligation, by which you do this, is in promoting a sense of religion and duty in your families, dependents, and connections. How much it is in the power of every parent or master to promote or defeat the aim of the professional teacher! They imbibe from him the tone of respect and attention, or of disregard and ridicule. He may obliterate the impression made, or stamp it into characters so deep as never to be obliterated. There is on his head a solemn responsibility.

But, further, the Unitarian minister is called to fill an advanced post in a state of warfare. The opinions of the times make him, to some extent, and whatever be his inclination, a controversialist and a proselytist. The Christian world is divided on topics of the deepest interest, and which have thrown all other subjects of difference into shade. Whether we should worship only the one God, the Father, or, together with him, the Son and the Holy Spirit; whether the founder of our religion was a man approved of God, or the infinite Deity incarnate in a human body; whether we are forgiven by the free grace of God, or the punishment of sin is only transferred to a substitute; whether the condition of salvation be that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord, or faith in a vicarious sacrifice; whether the inflictions of the divine government be corrective or vindictive;—these are points which can scarcely allow neutrality in themselves; or if they did, the practicability is precluded by the exclusive assumption on the one side, which is usually made, of the Christian name, of all Christian privileges and blessings

here, and of the hope of heaven hereafter. Unless the minister is content that the influence of his services should not extend beyond the individuals who first invited him; that death, or removal, should waste away his congregation, nor any accession supply the place of those of whom he is deprived; that the young and uninformed should be left a prey to the bold assumptions and assertions so often made with such imposing effect; that error should be unchecked, and bigotry unmitigated, and corruption unreformed, and the genuine truth of Jesus unrestored; that men should continue to think of revelation as a mystery, and of God as partial, and of faith alone as the means of salvation; unless he is content with this, which he who loves God, man, or truth cannot be, he must, in some degree, mingle in that mental conflict which rages in the land, and which nothing can terminate but the total suppression of Unitarian Christianity as a destructive heresy, or the full recognition of its glory as the word of God which Christ came into the world to testify, and which his apostles taught the nations.

How should you reward your minister for entering on this troublous scene? By not abandoning him in it. By strengthening his hands in every measure dictated by a prudent zeal. By affording him all the facilities which your countenance and liberality can give, in a struggle where he has to contend with the force of education, and prejudice, and long-received and widely spread opinions, and the zeal of enthusiasm, and the dictates of authority. You have placed him in the front of the battle, and it were disgraceful to desert him there. You make him, by your election, a mark for bigotry, perhaps for calumny, and it is just that the shield of your protection should be thrown before him. He is made your leader in a common cause, and, so long as he advances, in the spirit of his Master, to the establishment of truth, righteousness, and hope, you should follow after, and rally round him, and be found fellow-workers with him, as he is with Apostles, Christ, and God, for human knowledge and happiness.

It is specifically as the just recompense of a faithful and laborious minister that I have attempted to recommend a certain course of action; but that is far from being its only or its highest recommendation. That you should not

exact the devotion of time and talent without affording an adequate support; that you should be kind and hospitable, candid, friendly, and consistent; that you should not forsake the assembling of yourselves together for the united adoration of the common Father, the cultivation of the knowledge, love, and power of sacred truth, for preservation from sin, growth in goodness, and the cherishing of a brotherly love for humankind; that you should not sink into formality and indifference, or neutralise religious services by neglect, or abuse them by levity; that you should be most earnest and persevering in the pursuit of truth, and in the cultivation of every devout affection, and every personal and social virtue; that in your households and the world you should, both by language and demeanour, promote the influence of religious and moral principle; that you should have a zeal according to knowledge for God and Christianity, and, according to your abilities and in your several spheres, enter your manly protest against the fanaticism of the age,—these are your duties, not merely because thus your minister will have his reward, but because thus you will have your reward also. They are essential for your own sakes; for your own consistency, safety, and happiness. They are demanded of you by that gospel truth which is the free gift of God to man, and which, having received, you should act up to and impart; by that God who is glorified in his rational creatures when they behold him in his true character as the sole object of adoration, the impartial and universal Parent; by that Saviour whose mission was to reform, enlighten, purify, redeem, and bless the world; by mankind, whom you should regard as brethren, and with a brother's love warn, comfort, and improve; and by that heaven into which shall enter neither defilement nor malignity, that state of immortal purity, devotion, and benevolence, of which every one who has the enlightened hope purifieth himself even as Christ was pure. That you should feel this host of powerful motives will be a glad recompense to your minister's heart, while labouring among you on earth; and when he and you shall have rendered up the account of your mortal probation, it will make you his crown of glory and of joy in the great day of the Lord, the day of final retribution.

PUBLIC PRINCIPLE ESSENTIAL

TO THE

EXCELLENCE OF PRIVATE CHARACTER.

A Sermon preached at Finsbury Unitarian Chapel, March 1st, 1829, on occasion of the death of Mr. Benjamin Flower, *formerly Editor of the "Cambridge Intelligencer" and the "Political Review," and Author of "Reflections on the Principles of the French Revolution," "Memoirs of the Life and Writings of Robert Robinson," &c. &c.*

[1829.]

"Who is offended, and I burn not?" (2 Cor. xi. 29.)

The Holy Scriptures are the source of our doctrinal knowledge, of our moral principles, and of our devotional feelings and practices; but they are the source of each in that mode which is best adapted to our rational nature, and which most tends to improve that nature, and to conduct it towards perfection.

They do not teach theology by prescribing the articles of a creed to our implicit faith. Their better plan is to instruct by facts. They present to our minds the authentic record of supernatural events, accompanied by the illustrations of divinely commissioned messengers from heaven, and thus irresistibly produce the conviction that there is a God that judgeth in the earth, that his work is perfect, and that he is the God not of the dead but of the living, for all live to him.

They do not enforce holiness of life by particular precepts enjoining particular actions; but, by leading us to the comprehension of the end of our being, and of our various relations to our fellow-creatures and our God, they enlighten us as to the principles on which we should act at all times and in all circumstances, and they give us—

what is far more valuable and useful than a textual directory of our conduct—the spirit of Christ to dwell in our minds, purify our hearts, and make our lives adorn the gospel.

And although Judaism established a ritual containing the minutest directions for the minutest acts of external homage to the Deity, this was but a temporary procedure; these ordinances were to be abolished when he should come whose mission was to teach man that God is a Spirit, and they that worship him should worship him in spirit and in truth. These regulations were the *law*, not the gospel. The New Testament does not ordain the mode by which we should worship the Father. It leaves us at liberty to do that which we judge or feel to be most conducive to our improvement and comfort; so that we preserve the sincerity, simplicity, and spirituality which, in Christian worship, are essential qualities.

The test by which the devotional forms and practices of a congregation should be tried is, their fitness to answer the end for which we worship God; which is, that we may grow like God,—the God of purity and truth. In other words, their test is utility, and their obligation that of expediency—using both words in the noblest sense they bear; meaning by utility the best interests of the immortal being, and by expediency such a tendency to their promotion as, if neglected, must cover us with the shame of folly and of guilt.

Generally, I think, the practices adopted in our places of worship—I speak now as a Unitarian dissenter—will abide this test, and are therefore enforced upon our consciences by this obligation.

Perhaps one of the most doubtful customs—but that is much less prevalent than formerly—is that of preaching funeral sermons for individuals not generally known, and publicly to expatiate on whose character and loss seems likely to lacerate the feelings of the families to which they belonged, without any compensatory benefit to others who, till they heard of their death, were unconscious of their existence. The good which they can do in death, to those beyond their immediate circle, seems limited to rendering more impressive those general topics connected with the uncertainty of life, the approach of death, and the

solemnities of judgment, which occupy, and rightly, so prominent a place in pulpit admonitions.

But there can be no such doubt about calling the attention of a congregation to the death of persons who, though not moving in the higher ranks of social life, have made their names known by public exertions for the public good; whose characters and history are, to a certain extent, common property which we may properly use; and who have been sufficiently in the public eye to enable the preacher, by their posthumous aid, to "point a moral" which he would be glad to send home to the hearts of his auditors.

Such a man was the late BENJAMIN FLOWER; and on such grounds was it that I took on me to announce this discourse; though I would not by that assertion imply that my own feelings have not been strongly moved by the death of a man whom I have so long known and so highly regarded; my personal acquaintance with whom commenced twenty years ago; and my familiarity with whose name and my admiration of whose principles and exertions dating from much earlier, my very boyhood, and identifying themselves with my first young and warm aspirations in the cause of civil and religious liberty, of which he was then a mature, zealous, and efficient advocate.

I am not about to attempt an entire delineation of his character; or to exhibit its excellences, its peculiarities, its infirmities. It was a strongly marked, a very interesting, and a very valuable one. It had several of those combinations which interest both the theoretical and the practical moralist. For instance,—though no man could have a firmer faith in Christianity, or a higher estimate of its worth,—they were indeed inwrought into his very soul; they shone even on the broken fragments of his mind when disease had shattered it,—yet he led the way in denouncing the unchristian spirit and character of the prosecutions instituted against unbelievers for the publication of their opinions. He did this above thirty years ago; and the spirited and powerful remarks on this subject which he then published produced a remarkable effect on the mind of Mr. (afterwards Lord) Erskine, who had just obtained a verdict of Guilty against a printer of the name of Williams, for the publication of Paine's *Age of Reason*. Having ap-

plied to the prosecutors, the managers of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, to stay their proceedings, and they having refused, Mr. Erskine indignantly threw up his brief, and left them to employ some less enlightened or less scrupulous agent to call for judgment on the offender against a religion which was not more foully misrepresented in his publication than in their proceedings. Again: it was another and too infrequent a combination, that while his mind was actively employed on doctrinal and controversial subjects, while they were his habitual topics of thought for many years, his devotional feelings retained the earnestness and fervour of a young religionist. In prayer, at the last, his soul seemed to cast the slough of age, and to undergo already the renovation of immortality. Bodily infirmity had long rendered unavailing his personal attendance on the public services of religion, but his own house was ever a house of prayer, and it was ever his duty and delight to be a man of prayer. Moreover, with opinions of quite sufficient decision on all great questions, he held, and rejoiced to hold, the most amicable intercourse with persons of almost every variety of sentiment, alike opposed to him and to each other. And to these it may be added that, while his private friendships were warm, and his domestic affections intense, his attention to matters of public moment never ceased, his interest in them never abated; and the opportunity for doing good or averting evil, or for contributing to either result by his personal exertions, never came unheeded, or passed away unimproved. But the great feature of his character, that which coloured all his feelings, and influenced all his conduct, and pervaded his life, public and private, was his devotion to the cause of civil and religious liberty; his unquailing and unfailing hostility to all oppression; to state-craft and priest-craft (as he often phrased it); so that the text was indeed the motto of his thoughts, his heart, his actions. "Who is offended, and I burn not?" He was an exemplification of the important truth, that public principle is essential to the excellence of private character. He exhibited an excellence emanating from it, and imbued with it. And the attempt to illustrate and enforce that truth is, I think, the most appropriate tribute of respect which, on the present occasion, we can pay to his memory.

It would not be difficult to trace, at once minutely and extensively, the bearings of this predominant love of civil and religious liberty both upon the traits of character which have been already mentioned, and on others which will present themselves to the recollection of those who were personally acquainted with him. It formed those combinations of seemingly contrasted qualities which are really modifications of the same principle. It blended harmoniously with, or actually generated, the independence of thought which prevented his ever being the slave, in theology or politics, of prevailing systems, or of names however great and venerable; the piety which evinced his deep feeling of religion, while contending that it should have a free course and be glorified; the regard for truth which made his animadversions on error so unsparing; the candour which respected the persons and characters of the erroneous; and the justice which was jealous of the slightest invasion of the rights of even those who differed from him most remotely. Glowing in his inmost heart, its warmth and energy diffused themselves through all his feelings and attachments. It gave breadth, solidity, and elevation to the tone of his social communications; and it sharpened his naturally keen sense of those social blessings, the protection and promotion of which is the best office of law and magistracy, and of which their guardianship is efficient in proportion to the wisdom of their institution and the purity of their administration. The exhibition of its influence is completed in those qualities of integrity, activity, and consistency by which his public career was so eminently distinguished. Never, indeed, was there a sterner political integrity. Often must his worldly interests have been injured; often must his course have been one of labour, peril, and sacrifice; and on one occasion he was deprived of his liberty for months for employing a tone of censure such as the press may now perhaps use with impunity, but an impunity which such men have earned for it by their boldness and their sufferings. He erred, it may be, in the strong terms of reprobation which he sometimes applied to what he deemed hostile to civil and religious liberty; but it was an error flowing from the consciousness of his own untainted and unstained rectitude through a long and active life. And how varied and ceaseless was his activity in that cause! By his

exertions the *Cambridge Intelligencer* was raised to a rank and vested with an influence to which scarcely any other provincial journal has ever attained. There yet exist the strongest attestations to its usefulness by the purest, the most exalted, and the most illustrious political characters of that period. The *Political Review*, which followed, was conducted in the same spirit. His *Reflections on the Principles of the French Revolution*, and other original works, are evidences of the energetic devotion of his talents to the cause of human improvement. If we look at the publications which issued from his press, the mark is on them of the ruling passion. It was his practice, and one which deserves honour and imitation, not to lend himself to whatever might most have conduced to his own emolument, but to bring and keep before the public a variety of works (such as that admirable Essay of Sykes on the *Innocency of Involuntary Error*, and others of like spirit and tendency), fraught with sound and beneficent principles, to which he thus gave a wide and constant circulation. His edition of the *Miscellaneous Works of Robert Robinson* is a noble monument to a man of kindred soul. And there was another way in which that mental affinity was shown. I refer to his occasional efforts as a preacher, in which it could not fail to be recognised. There was the same warfare with hypocrisy, dogmatism, and spiritual domination; often a similar felicity of scriptural application and exposition; and always the same single purpose of enforcing religion as a personal concern, and as consisting essentially in holiness of heart and life. His labours in this capacity among the villages of Cambridgeshire were peculiarly acceptable and useful. Of some discourses a vivid impression yet remains; and many have left recollections deep, permanent, and grateful. And his *consistency* was complete. As it pervaded all his feelings, it extended through all his years. The last public occasion at which he was present was a commemoration of those acquittals of 1794, which saved this country from a reign of terror. The last time he had recourse to the press was in a short letter, which appeared both in a Trinitarian and in a Unitarian periodical, calling on dissenting ministers to celebrate St. Bartholomew's-day—which fell last year upon a Sunday—by proclaiming from their pulpits the great principles of Protestant Dissent and Religious Liberty. The last time that

he ever held a pen, on the last day that Providence allowed the use of his mental faculties, was to invite myself to come to him to enjoy the prospects now so happily opening on the world of the demolition of civil oppressions in the name, the abused name, of religion. And so should such a life close; so should the lesson I have stated be enforced. So should we endeavour not to live unto ourselves, but unto others; assured that in so doing we best ultimately do live unto ourselves, and answer the end for which our Maker gave us being.

We often hear it set up as an excuse for a man who is utterly indifferent to his duties as a member of Christian and political society, or even who acts inconsistently with them, that he is no public man, but a good private character. I can only say, that if it *be* good in the neglect of those duties, it would be much better in their observances. If it have goodness, it cannot have excellence; to that, public principle is essential.

I say *public principle,* not *public prejudice.* An opinion inherited from an ancestor, or taken by contact with a multitude, cannot deserve to be called a *principle.* That implies information, thought, conviction. It is a public principle from its relation to society. It includes what belongs to the assertion of social rights; to the enforcement of social duties; to the diffusion of information; to the relief or alleviation of human calamities; to the correction of abuses; to the establishment of benevolent institutions; to the promotion of improvement; to whatever tends towards the well-being of mankind, physically, politically, morally, religiously.

By a principle, I mean an opinion which goes forth into action, not a dormant conviction, which is like the faith that, being without works, is dead, and neither saves the soul of its possessor nor benefits society. Every man can do something for mankind if he will. He who professes not to know how, only avows an ignorance which aggravates his culpability.

I say *public principle,* not *party spirit.* The man in whose support of, or opposition to, measures which influence the welfare of the nation, that welfare is a consideration *second* to the elevation to power of the faction to which he belongs; the man who is more anxious for swelling the

numbers, augmenting the revenue, or exalting the importance of the church or sect to which he belongs, than to spread abroad the knowledge, the influence, and the consolations of the gospel; the man who has more pleasurable emotion in the bustle of charitable business, in trumpeting the verbose report, in blazoning the subscription list, than in the sight or mental realisation of the mitigation of suffering, the supply of want, the prevention of ignorance and vice,—these men may be able partisans, but they are as grossly selfish as those who are most thoughtless of such matters, and have not an atom more public principle than the most inert.

Public principle is essential to the excellence of private character, if we try it by the test of *human nature*. Without it, that nature is not properly developed. The instincts and tendencies of our constitution are social. In public good our faculties have their noblest object. When is reason more exalted than when deliberating on man's condition and capacity, contrasting the narrowness of the one with the immensity of the other, and devising the means by which they may become commensurate, and the golden urn of the human soul be filled with the nectar of felicity? When is imagination more glorious than in remoulding things which are into the lovelier forms which hope and prophecy tell us shall be; melting the elements with fervent heat, and rolling up the heavens like a scroll, to enchant our gaze with the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness? And when is benevolence more godlike, than in rising from the almost merely physical uneasiness of sympathy with visible individual suffering, to the expansive compassion which feels with all that feel—"who is weak, and I am not weak?"—the generous indignation which is insulted wherever there is oppression—"who is offended, and I burn not?"—the devotion to a community which involves the sacrifice of self—"I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren"—and the identification with others which says, even of the crown of celestial glory to be bestowed by the Lord at that day, "Not to ME ONLY,—not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."

This is human nature, as shown in the apostle Paul. Do not these sentiments or principles enter largely into the

excellence of the man? But of this argument we may say, that a greater than Paul is here. Look at Christ. The son of Mary, the friend of Lazarus, the teacher of John,—these were his private relations; but would Mary have so gloried in that son, would Lazarus have so confided in that friend, would John have so devoutly loved that master, had he not been one who loved and lived for all mankind; who wept over Jerusalem, and died for the salvation of the world? It was in this addition that he became the perfection of humanity.

Usefulness to society is a fair test of the worth of character. Indeed it is that by which society must and ought to estimate private character. Now all the good which the best man without active public principle does is, as to him, accidental; and being accidental, it is of course uncertain and irregular. If all men were like him, what would be the consequence? Political despotism unchecked in the state, spiritual despotism in the church, the corruption of morals, and the abundance and superabundance of misery. It is true that public principle may yet be mistaken principle; and public exertion may be exertion misdirected. But what corrects this? Not inertness, but general activity. Error is comparatively harmless where mind is alive, and discussion prevails; it is in the region of indifference and torpor that they flourish, and become mighty, and work their noxious results. It was while the good man slept that the enemy sowed his tares. So has it often been while good men slept.

There can be no question that the number of persons in this country who have informed themselves and take a lively interest in what are properly not individual, but public concerns, is immensely greater, in proportion even to its augmented population, than at any former period. The statutes which have affected, or do affect, some classes of religionists; the condition of slaves, and the existence of slavery; the object of punishment, and its proportion to criminality; the laws of commercial intercourse; the extension and the improvement of education; the state of the poor, and the spirit and tendency of different systems of faith and worship,—these are matters on which a mighty mass of thought and feeling is in constant exercise. Blessed be God that it is so! Blessed be the memories of the men

who have aided in making it so! And who can look round and say that, though many may think wrongly and act absurdly; though a nation may be for a while blinded by ignorance or prejudice, and exerting itself for mischief, —who can say that this is not a state of things infinitely better for the country at large, and by speedy influence for almost every individual in that country; and infinitely more promising for futurity, than when the bulk of the people took no such interest; when virtue was contented with a good private character, and when two factions, consisting of individuals of wealth and station, with the admixture perhaps of a few talented adventurers, played their game of oratory and intrigue for the prize of ruling and plundering a mighty but slumbering nation?

It is too often the case, however, that even the successful application of this test is unavailing. It implies the disposition we would generate to feel its power. Well, then, I will bring it home more closely. I say that public principle is essential to the excellence of private character, if we only regard character in its influence upon *personal enjoyment*. I say that the man of public principle is the happier man. I will take the other with all his advantages about him. Give him education and taste; give him fortune, friends, and family; and I say still that, with all this, we can neither receive nor communicate—which is needful for receiving again by reflection—the kind nor the degree of enjoyment which he does who has a head to think, a heart to feel, and a hand to labour, for the public good and the public improvement. Without these, what *is* a man in the circle of his family and friends? What are the topics on which he and they dwell, and interchange their thoughts and feelings? His "talk may be of bullocks," or it may be of statues; still it will be narrow and grovelling. Within the little limits of self will every thing be "cabined, cribbed, confined." There will be nothing to expand the intellect in large thoughts, and the bosom with generous emotions. The strains of his soul will be but as those of the encaged bird in the parlour; not like the free notes of that which soars towards heaven, and looks down on a wide circumference of earth. Happiness has not room to live in such a soul. It needs one like an ample hall, where are altars for God's worship, and monuments

of the great and good of past times, and treasures of history and science, and annals of human life and of the human heart; and whence are large views of social existence, in all its diversities, its inequalities, and its prospects. And the poor man who has these—as any man may have who cultivates his faculties with the opportunities which are within common reach—in whose mind dwell the love and knowledge of God and of his neighbour,—is a man of larger soul, and therefore of larger enjoyment.

And all accidental and external advantages are uncertain and transitory. A man may outlive them all; or the poor glittering material which remains may pall on his sight. Where and what is he then? But he into whose thoughts, affections, and pleasures the well-being of society largely enters, can never be miserable. His wealth is not ventured in one vessel, but it is in every ship that sails. He is happy in the advance of human happiness; and that advances with the progress of human improvement; and that is secured by the agency of Providence; and that is conducted by the omnipotence of God.

Let us try this position by the test of *Christian precept*. Has that man a good private character, by the Christian standard, who does not love his neighbour as himself? Has that man a good private character who does not do good unto all men, especially unto those of the household of faith? Has that man a good private character who cares not about, collectively or individually, the naked, the prisoner, the stranger, even to the bestowment of a cup of cold water? Has that man a good private character who, instead of truly saying with the text, "Who is offended, and I burn not?" neither knows nor cares about the plundering of one class, the crushing of another, the refusal of right, the infliction of wrong, the obstruction of moral or religious truth, the offending and ensnaring of thousands and millions, but deems it enough to plead, "Thou canst not say *I* did it;" forgetting that "He who allows oppression, shares the crime"?

Or turn from particular precepts to the *spirit of the gospel*. What are all its displays of a God of universal love; of a Saviour promised for the blessing of all nations; of apostles who went forth to preach glad tidings in every country; its benevolence embracing humanity itself, and

its worship fitting for humanity itself in which to hold communion with the Deity; its demolition of all restriction, its abrogation of Jewish privilege, its principles of universal charity; its coming resurrection, its impartial judgment; its prophecies of future glories on earth, in heaven, to eternity, —what are all these but indications that its votaries should be men of dignity and expansiveness of mind; should look above and around them; should trample a base selfishness in the dust; and live in that communion of heart with others which we feel when reading the scriptures, if we have any perception of their spirit; which we feel in prayer to God, if we have any mental realisation of his almighty and beneficent presence?

Christian devotion, even in its most personal and private modification, when it is most exclusively restricted to communion between man's heart and his Maker, assumes the form of a care for others' good, a recognition of their claims to love, forgiveness, active kindness; and is a solemn pledge of benevolence, and renunciation of selfishness, in the sight of God. What is our Lord's direction for individual devotion? Enter into thy closet; shut thy door; pray to thy Father in secret. And how is God invoked in this redoubled and guarded seclusion? The utterance of the holy name with which the prayer commences identifies the worshiper with his brethren of humankind, and in the deepest solitude he still adores Our Father. He prays for his own growth in righteousness, by its inclusion in the progress of the divine kingdom of righteousness; and with the petition for mercy is indissolubly blended the solemn profession of the exercise of mercy. The man of prayer must, then, be the man of active benevolence. The throne of grace is insulted by the homage of selfishness, inertness, or indifference.

And think of that heaven to which we humbly trust we are following Jesus, the captain of our salvation. Why is he entered there, as our forerunner, but because he loved mankind even to death, the death of the cross? Where is our allegiance to him, if we study not his law of love to our brethren? The society of heaven is one great fellowship of the wise and good. Let us not pretend to be anxious for admission to that communion unless we evince a fellowship of their spirit here, and emulate the benefactors of the

world. The occupation of heaven is no selfish work, but an eternal and felicitous labour of love. Strange and irksome task for him who here lives only to himself! The happiness of heaven is in seeing the face of God; in beholding the development of plans here mysterious; in watching the transformation of evil into good; in tracing the manifold operations of Infinite Wisdom; in witnessing the progressive triumphs of righteousness and joy;—that is, it is happiness which a character existing here without that identification with others which we have termed public principle is incapable of enjoying, and, therefore, in relation to which such a character is essentially defective.

Let us study, then, to be men of God, thoroughly furnished unto all good works, and imbued with all good principles, public and private; that when the great Master who intrusted us with the talents, whatever they be, which we possess, shall summon us by death to his presence, to render our account, we may humbly present, with the faculties we received, the good which with them we achieved, and be greeted with the joyful sounds, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

THE PROVIDENCE OF GOD

IN THE

PROGRESS OF RELIGIOUS LIBERTY.

A Sermon preached at Finsbury Unitarian Chapel, Sunday, May 17, *on occasion of the passing of the Catholic Relief Bill, and the anniversary of the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts.*

[1829.]

"God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods" (Psalm lxxxii. 1).

These words intimate both the influence and the responsibility under which the mighty ones of the earth, the political gods of the nations, exercise their authority: an influence as irresistible as that which marshals the stars in their constellations, or guides the winds in their career; and a responsibility more complete than any similitude can express, as it involves rendering an account, not only of actions, but of motives, at the tribunal of supreme and omniscient justice; at that tribunal where the rich and the poor shall meet together before the Lord, who is the Maker of them all, in whose hand are the hearts of princes, and who will render to every man according to his works.

While it is for rulers and legislators themselves to bear in mind that responsibility, rendered yet more awful by the magnitude of the powers intrusted to them, and, consequently, that of the results of their deeds, it is for all to mark how they are, consciously or unconsciously, agents of Divine Providence for furthering its designs, portions of the machinery by which the plans of the Divine government are realised on earth.

With caution and humility should we speculate on the ways of Providence and the will of God; for though we

may have satisfactory assurance that his will is always beneficent, yet his mercies are often bestowed in very different ways from what our minds anticipated or our hearts desired. The fancied blessings we struggled for often only make and mock our misery, while the most deprecated events issue in good beyond our boldest hopes. Yet if there be any thing in the social state which we may safely pronounce a good, it is religious liberty; if there be any thing in the course of events which it becomes us to ascribe to Providence, and acknowledge with devout gratitude, it is the progress of religious liberty; and if such feelings have ever been imperatively demanded by such events, in any age or country, they assuredly are by the changes which have recently taken place in British legislation.

It was but a twelvemonth yesterday from the completion, by the royal assent, of the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts; and within the last month has that assent been given to the Catholic Relief Bill. A great principle has thus been solemnly recognised and extensively adopted in our legislation. Religious liberty is now the law of the land. Whatever of exclusion and inequality may remain is the exception, not the rule. That is accomplished for which, as Englishmen, we have sent petitions to our lawgivers; for which, as Christians, we have offered prayers to our God. It would be wrong for such an event to pass unnoticed. It would be far more wrong to make it an occasion of party triumph, of insult, taunt, or irritation. If we rejoice, it is as children of God and brethren of mankind, who honestly believe that our heavenly Father has thus given us a token of his love, and not us merely, but our brethren in the gospel, of whatever mode of faith; our brethren in country, to the utmost boundaries of this mighty empire; our brethren in the yet more comprehensive bonds of a common nature; for the prosperity and glory of Britain have a prompt and powerful action upon the well-being of humanity.

My aim is simply to show *why* we trace and gratefully acknowledge a beneficent Providence in the progress of religious liberty in general, and in these events in particular. We do so because,

1. The progress of religious liberty is the advance of a *Christian principle.*

The New Testament is no code of mental slavery, no prison of souls, no storehouse of spiritual sceptres and spiritual chains, no patent of lordship for creed-makers or creed-imposers, but the charter of religious freedom, the guarantee of religious discipleship, in which all are brethren, and our one Master is Christ, and our one Father God; wherein apostles disclaim lordship over faith; and churches combine social union with individual liberty, letting every one be fully persuaded in his own mind, and act on his persuasion; and all carnal weapons are abjured and trampled on; and the Almighty and impartial God "hath fixed his canon" against persecution in all its degrees, and in all its forms, within the church, and without the church, and to all ages.

Thus, at least, do we read the New Testament; thus do we understand the very nature of divine revelation itself, which, consisting of supernatural facts to be reasoned upon, implies the free use of his mental faculties by each individual student of the word, unbiassed by man's fear or favour; thus do we expound the preaching of its missionaries, who rested, not faith on authority, but facts on testimony, and doctrines on argument, and praised those who searched the scriptures; thus do we see the beauty of that bond of union which held converts together by the one simple confession that Jesus was the Christ, each building his opinions on that foundation, and therefore all cemented by a love which slaves of system, and bands of bigots, and armies of persecutors, and companies of chartered monopolists, never felt. Thus do we enter into that plan of doctrinal and preceptive instruction which, appealing to our common nature, teaches us to do unto others as we would that they should do unto us; which, appealing to the universal love of God, enjoins on us a like unrestricted benevolence; which, revealing a future judgment, commands us not to judge one another; and which, adverting to the baleful influences of spiritual subjugation, enjoins that we stand fast in the liberty wherewith Christ has made us free. And this do we love in the conduct of our great Teacher, that he shamed Jewish bigotry by the parable of the Good Samaritan, all heretic and idolater as he might be deemed; that he silenced the worldly ambition and selfish contentions of

his disciples by placing in the midst a little child to be their model; that he rebuked the erring zeal which would have called down fire from heaven; that he warned the assuming and the violent against oppressing and ill-treating their fellow-servants; and that he established a kingdom, not of this world, which is not meat and drink—not pride, pomp, and power, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit.

We rejoice, then, as Christians, that this gospel principle is become part and parcel of our country's law. We consider the abrogation of penal statutes and political inequalities as being, so far, a conversion to Christianity. The proper union of law and Christianity is not when law affects to give Christianity the protection of its penalties, but when the principles of Christianity command law, and influence its formation and execution. In the one case, Christ's kingdom becomes a kingdom of this world; in the other, the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ.

2. The advance of religious liberty is that of *public right.* Almost all governments have originated in force, in conquest. Almost all institutions have been established, not by fair and equal compact, but under the influence of terror. The people's rights have afterwards been wrested back, sometimes by insurrection and revolution; more commonly by the progress of opinion, the spread of that knowledge which is power. The process is a slow one; but it is certain, safe, and beneficent. The lover of justice and of mankind will hail every step made in it with fervent gratulation and with devout thanksgiving. Freedom of thought and action in religion is a natural and universal right,—inalienable; essential to moral dignity and to the higher degrees of social and individual happiness; most frequently and pertinaciously violated; and the recovery of which is therefore a solid and noble ground of rejoicing.

What Catholics and dissenters have regained was their rightful inheritance as human beings. It ought never to have been taken from them. That it was, was an act of injustice, oppression, and persecution. Political delinquencies are always separable from religious professions; nor can the proscription of a worship ever be the fitting punishment of insubordination. That proscription is itself

a worse offence than any it can be employed to punish. Treason interposes between the subject and his sovereign; persecution between man's conscience and his God. The legislature has abolished a great wrong, and so left standing a natural and eternal right.

3. The progress of religious liberty is the advance of *national prosperity*. Despotic governments have allowed religious liberty because it was a source of strength. By it princes have availed themselves of the talents of many an able man, whom the fear, or the hatred, or the covetousness of bigotry would have condemned to a private station. By it they have united the hearts of a people, making them a solid mass of resistance, or an overwhelming avalanche of aggression. Still greater must be the effect on communities otherwise free. Who does not feel that by late events the position of our country, in relation to all other countries, has become more elevated, more imposing? The weight of a curse has been heaved overboard from the vessel of the state, and she rises in the waters, and lightly dashes away the foaming billows, and displays her armed sides, now free to act, and not rashly to be braved, and more loftily and proudly floats her banner upon the winds of heaven. In the population of Ireland there is just so much power to be employed, instead of so much of discontent to be repressed. There is external strength, because there is internal health. The Catholics, no longer under the ban of the empire, will begin to be a blessing to it. Their first noble takes his station in the legislature; and their meanest peasant feels the more confidence in the laws. In a proscribed sect there is an unbroken chain of feeling from the highest to the lowest. Their privations and their insults are all in common. They are united in their degradation, for they are united *by* their degradation. Whether in their struggles they sometimes rise above, or are kept permanently below, the rest of the community, they are still the foes of the rest of the community. Remove the proscription; equalise their condition and their prospects; and the very energy which had been worse than wasted in party conflict becomes the machinery of individual and national prosperity. Catholic and Protestant, feeling alike safe in the protection of the laws, alike aspiring to the rewards of industry and talent, must con-

stitute a more flourishing people than a plundering and oppressing, and a plundered and oppressed party.

4. The progress of religious liberty is that of *socia harmony*. Theological antipathies, though not wholly, yet in part, may be resolved into the temporal advantages and disadvantages which are connected with different professions of faith. These give them, oh, how much, of vigour, and bitterness, and obstinacy, and extension, and carry them into the intercourse of society, and the mart of commerce, and the hall of justice, and the school of childhood, and the temple of God, and to the family fireside. How can religionists be expected to meet and mingle on terms of kindness and friendship, when this faith walks the streets in golden bracelets, and that in iron fetters; this in silk and purple, that in the felon's garb? It is not with such distinctions and contrasts ever visible that man meets man in the frankness and the enjoyment of the social circle. Hearty and pleasurable communications are not for the plunderer and the plundered, the oppressor and the oppressed, the gaoler and the prisoner, the privileged and the excluded; they are for men, thinking differently, but thinking freely; and alike free to follow the dictates of their consciences in the worship of their God, and the avowal of their opinions. This is a blessing included in religious liberty, promoted by every approximation towards it, for which we may consistently and worthily praise the Providence that leads to its enjoyment. It is so much of bitterness abstracted from, that is, of pleasure added to, the cup of social life.

5. The progress of religious liberty is that of *religious candour*. That which promotes the harmonious intercourse of different sects and religions has a yet further and greater good than social enjoyment; it leads towards a juster estimate of character; it promotes candour. The sectarian spirit, which knows no truth or goodness beyond its own creed and party, is compelled to do homage to the knowledge and virtue which it encounters without that boundary. It meets a heretic. He is not the scoffer, the ungodly and supercilious being, which bigotry had painted him. It meets a Catholic. There is nothing of idolatrous degradation in his manner; and his hand bears no torch wherewith to light again the fires of Smithfield. The maxim that "familiarity breeds contempt," perhaps seldom

true but of narrow and vulgar minds, is especially false of that of religious partisans. It generates justice, respect, affection. It was because the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans that our Lord had to tell his disciples of the Good Samaritan. In his parable he did but anticipate and supply the office of truth and experience. Religious liberty is a Christian missionary, and preaches such parables of and to hostile sects and denominations. Thank God for sending it forth to convert men to faith in one another's worth!

6. The progress of religious liberty is that of *theological truth*. This grows out of the last particular, as that did out of the preceding. For if intercourse promotes candour, candour promotes truth. Where that is, we pretend not to say. Entirely, perhaps, with no party; but scattered through all; and to be attained by all when each can be listened to by each with fairness. To proselyte and persecute together comes within neither man's power nor God's blessing. It is absurd to expect that he who acquiesces in the temporal degradation of another should have full credit for ability and zeal to advance his spiritual good. The best prospect of the spread of truth is where discussion is free, and sects are equal; where there is nothing to gain or to lose by the profession of any particular faith; and where intercourse and communication are such, that the misrepresentations of bigotry or craft are sure to be speedily detected. If we are not quite in such a state, we have at least made one of the most noble advances towards it that has ever been made by a legislative body. To decree the political equality of all faiths is to decree the ultimate prevalence of the true faith, whatever that faith may be. It is with a free course that God's word is glorified.

7. There is something more valuable and precious still than theological truth; that is, *the Christian spirit*. Religious liberty serves this both directly and indirectly. Indirectly, by its promoting truth, harmony, candour, and other subsidiaries of mental and moral excellence; directly, by the dignifying consciousness of its possession, which makes the believer "venerate himself as man" and as Christian. The elevation of human character is the great object of divine revelation. Its aim is to develop those "high capacious powers which lie folded up in man;" and

exhibit our nature in the depth of its emotions, the immensity of its faculties, the grandeur of its aspirations. The Christian spirit is the image of God in the soul of man. It walks at large over the earth, seeking truth and goodness, and loving them wherever they may be found. It owns no master in the world but the God who made the world. In piety it ascends to heaven; in love it flows over the earth. It scorns the paltry, incumbering, and polluting aid of political patronage, like Saul's armour upon David, shackling its bounding steps, and crippling the free arm that, with its sling and stone, can level the proudest champion who defies the living God. It is not of the world, because it is above the world. It loves to break from others' limbs the chains by which it disdains to have its own enfettered. It tells truth in love, and shows faith by works. Mercy, and truth, and righteousness, and peace are its attributes, as they are those of its heavenly Father; from whom it emanates; whom it best represents on earth; and to whose bosom it returns, there to rest in eternal blessedness.

Oh, but little can man do in such a work as this! Little to this are the splendid achievements of senators, conquerors, and sovereigns. They do most when they draw back the hand which, by pretending to touch the ark of God for support, only wrought profanity, pollution, and a curse. And when such a legislature as ours, over such a people, renounces the penalties and proscriptions of former ages; when to diversity of religious creeds and forms they proclaim equality of civil rights,—we may surely say, This is the finger of God; it is Providence in its benignity; "God standeth in the congregation of the mighty; he judgeth among the gods."

I have not gone into particular points of the discussion about Dissenters and Catholics, because I think the subject has been exhausted in itself, and familiarised to all; because many of them would not well accord with this time and place; and because every thing like the triumph or the defeat of this or that class should be forgotten—the sooner the better. What we rejoice in is the solemn public legislative recognition of a great principle, a Christian principle, and one most subservient to human improvement and happiness. One fact I shall advert to, because it enhances the worth of that recognition, and promises the stability

and extensiveness of the good we hope to result—I mean, the manner in which this change has been wrought. Religious liberty has not been, in this case, a master's gift or a political party's victory, but the inevitable result of events. It has been avowedly a concession which could not be withheld. It was a measure commanded by the spirit of the age, and which neither chicanery could evade nor force resist. It is the bloodless and glorious conquest of opinion. The greatest statesmen, orators, and ministers of the British Senate had struggled for it, and in vain. Their logic could not convince; their eloquence could not persuade; their power could not command. But knowledge went on spreading; and determination was firm in the breasts of injured millions; and Ireland proved the truth of the maxim, that "for a nation to be free, it is sufficient that she wills it;" and her religious liberty was pronounced inevitable by hostile minds, and proclaimed by hostile voices, and proffered by hostile hands, as a destiny which Heaven had decreed, and man would but vainly and madly strive to prevent. And while this fact should impress us with the agency of Providence, while it should inspire us with holy and solemn gratitude, it is also a lesson of instruction for us, which we should take heed of, and lay to heart, and act upon as the injunction of a voice from heaven.

It indicates the course and means of public improvement.

While we praise, and that sincerely and deservedly, those who have sacrificed so much to their conviction of the necessity of this measure, and have so honourably carried it to its completion; and those who have long and steadily, often almost hopelessly, laboured for its accomplishment: and those, the mighty dead, who led on the fight, like gallant knights of old, in advance of their own bands and of the world; the rival statesmen, whose warfare "shook realms and nations," with all that constellation of splendid names, now set, which clustered around them,—we must not forget that none of them all have done this; that their aid, in different ways, was through the power of public opinion, that power of which every man has his share, and his corresponding responsibility. And thus may legislators know which way that tide is flowing. They are taught how they *can* promote religion. They must adopt its principles—not interfere with its doctrines or its forms; they

must follow out those principles to their consequences. Christianity is a system of free thought and action: they have struck at the head and front of persecution; they must blot out every remaining particle of its details from the statute-book. Christianity is a system of knowledge: they must not allow private interest and antiquated notions to impede the progress of the light, which the darkness will vainly strive to hinder. It is a system of correction and improvement: the statute-book must cease to be vindictive in its punishments, and become preventive and reformatory. And in preparation for this every enlightened man must bear his part, and do his duty, and wait the event, secure of final success; for in this we are fellow-workers with God and Christ.

It is a warning to religionists. It tells the priest he must not expect his dogmas to pass unquestioned on authority; the bigot, that he must beware of blackening the persons or doctrines of his theological rivals; the sectarian, that there must soon be liberty of thought and speech *in* the church, as well as out of it; and all the contending tribes of theologians, that the time is fast going in which anathemas will terrify, and every little phrase or ceremony become the badge of a party, and men's eyes be blinded to the grand truth, that in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him.

Religious liberty is so important because religion itself is inestimable. May these recollections, efforts, feelings, prospects, endear it the more to our hearts, and render more universal its dominion over our lives! Let it grow in us as we anticipate its growth in the earth. May the kingdom of God come within us, as we hope for its coming to all nations. Wishing to see a rich harvest of truth and freedom, peace and charity, abroad in the world, may we have of that good seed sown in our hearts and bearing fruit in our lives. Thus may we be preparing to join the free, exalted, and happy community of heaven. Little will it avail us that the kingdoms of this world become the kingdoms of our God and of his Christ, if Christ reign not in our souls. This is our first concern with the gospel, extensive as are the public benefits which flow from its subordinate influences. For it is the fruit of the tree of life, in the paradise of God, which is immortal happiness to the individual, though "its leaves are for the healing of the nations."

THE PRACTICAL IMPORTANCE OF THE UNITARIAN CONTROVERSY.

A Sermon delivered in Strand-Street Chapel, Dublin, on Easter Sunday, April 3, 1831, *on the occasion of the first Anniversary of the formation of the Irish Unitarian Christian Society.*

[1831.]

To the Unitarians of Ireland.

Fellow Christians,—I have complied with your request for the publication of the following discourse, in the hope that to many individuals it may be a memorial of the brief, but pleasant, and I trust not useless, intercourse which we enjoyed on the occasion of its delivery; and that, together with the able exposition of Christian doctrine which we heard from the Rev. Henry Montgomery, it may also serve as a record of the commencement of your Society, of the principles on which it was founded, and of the objects which it is intended to realise. I inscribe it to you as a body, trusting that no long time will elapse before you will universally identify yourselves with the Irish Unitarian Christian Society, as one of the best methods of professing the faith and extending the influence of the pure gospel of Christ.

I congratulate you on your wise and manly adoption of the term *Unitarian;* a term at once so distinctive and so comprehensive. Long may it serve as your bond of union, while it also indicates your mutual toleration of individual diversities of opinion, and thus be the watch-word of your struggles in defence of gospel faith and of gospel freedom. Arian and Humanitarian, Baptist and Pædobaptist, Presbyterian and Independent, are all unimportant distinctions compared with those of Unitarian and Trinitarian. The day must come, and would that it were already come,

when that greatest difference shall pass into oblivion; but of those minor diversities, the day of oblivion ought to have arrived. They are fruits of that spirit of sectarianism which spreads so widely and works so mischievously; which tends to narrow the mind and embitter the heart; which fills society with contentions, and holds individual thought in a not less iron vassalage than even the sternest dominion over conscience. This spirit is a nuisance which all good men should endeavour to abate; and by uniting to promote the Unitarian faith, we are not striving to set up a new sect, but to put down universally the sectarian spirit. Our principles are not those of a party, but of Christianity; and our object is to display them in all their native simplicity, beauty, and power, by clearing away the corrupt additions that have commonly been the badges of party, and the occasions of division and persecution. All Christians profess to believe that there is but one God: our object is to prevent their longer nullifying this fundamental truth by the fiction of a plurality of divine persons. All Christians profess to hold, as we do, that the one God is the Father: we would prevent their desecrating that name by ascribing to the Deity partiality, caprice, vindictiveness, and whatever other attributes tend to transform the parent into the tyrant. All Christians profess to believe in Christ as the Saviour of the world: we only contend against the interpretations which ascribe to his mission a restricted design, or an imperfect accomplishment. All Christians profess to anticipate a future judgment: our aim is to make them bear in mind consistently that it will be according to our works, and with reference to our capacities and circumstances. They are the universal and undeniable truths of Christianity which we advocate; they are the added peculiarities of sects and parties to which we oppose ourselves. And these essential truths group themselves around the Divine Unity as a centre. It is the connection of logical deduction, as well as of apostolic declaration, "that to us there is but one God," and that one God "the Father, of whom are all things; and one Lord Jesus Christ, by whom are all things." Nor is the Divine Unity more closely blended with doctrinal truth than with moral practice. Supreme love must be an undivided affection, and supreme homage an undivided worship. And if we

look at the records of the times of reformation in the history of religion, we shall perceive that they have always been called for by departures, in some degree, from the faith of the Divine Unity; and have always exhibited, in a corresponding degree, a recurrence to that important tenet. It was when the world first fell into idolatry that Abraham, the father of the faithful, was called to bear his testimony to the one God. The prophets were commissioned to rebuke the Israelites when they bowed at the altars of the false gods of surrounding nations. The destruction of the mythology of Greece and Rome was the original work of Christianity. And if what we commonly term the Reformation left the Trinity an object of common faith and worship—a fact which shows that the Reformation is only yet in progress—it nevertheless had thus much of the common character of reformations, that it caused the discontinuance to a large extent of the worship of inferior beings, of saints and angels. And even if we contemplate similar struggles beyond the boundaries of revealed religion, we trace an analogous character. The teachings of Socrates were Unitarian, as compared with the superstitions of the Athenians; those of Mahomet, as compared with the idolatries of the Arabs; and those of the modern Monotheists of India, as compared with the adoration of the millions of deities whom their less enlightened countrymen serve. Unitarianism is therefore the symbol of reformation; of reformation practical as well as doctrinal, correcting not only men's opinions, but their hearts and lives. It is the restoration of the entire gospel to its native purity. It would be difficult to point out a country in which this is more needed than in Ireland, where the great mass of your population still retains its attachment to the Roman Catholic system, and lives in subjection to that great spiritual despotism; where zealous fanatics, affecting to herald a new reformation, aim at those sudden conversions by which the vilest sinners are said in a moment to become heirs of eternal joy; and where there is an Established Church exhibiting the extreme form of the manifold evils which flow from the connection of a religion with the state, pressing on the community with a burden too heavy to be much longer borne. What a field for exertion is here presented!

Unitarians of Ireland, hear the voice of one who has no

title but that which he derives from your recent invitation to address you; whose encouragement is in the kind attention with which you then listened to him; and whose qualification is that of experience of the operations of societies here, similar to that which you have instituted, imparting some knowledge of the errors they may commit, the good they may achieve, and the manner in which their efforts may be best directed. Hasten to support your new society. Let the support be prompt, liberal, and general throughout your country. The deputation from Cork will have told of the spirit which animated your meeting, and will send it from heart to heart till it shall pervade the Unitarianism of the South. And Henry Montgomery, that tower of strength, with his voice of thunder, shall peal the signal for united zeal and exertion through the North. In Dublin you have ministers, whose names it would be superfluous for me to eulogise, who will not fail to fan the flame which is now kindled; who will promote this holy cause by all the power of their characters and of their varied attainments, and through their several spheres of honourable and beneficent influence. Place your society at once on a permanent basis. Let no man hang back on account of little diversities of opinion. No opinion can be compromised by joining a society founded on the broad principle of your institution. Compromised? It is the holding back that compromises Unitarian principles; it misrepresents us to the world most grievously; it declares, virtually at least, that we profess or require uniformity on minor points; that we are responsible for each other's speculations; that our union is destructive of that individual liberty of thought and speech, the maintenance of which is one of the peculiar characters and the peculiar glory of our religion. By refusing to join such a society on such grounds, we declare that we cannot agree to differ; that besides those mighty differences which prevent worship at the same altar, we, like others, divide on subordinate tenets, and are prevented by them from mutual and hearty coöperation. Here is much more compromised than any Unitarian can possibly compromise by adhesion to your union. Rally around it then unanimously. Impart vigour to its early operations. Stint not yourselves to its nominal subscription. Let the rich by their

ample contributions, and the poor by their accumulated mites, replenish its funds and send it on conquering and to conquer.

And let me also mention a topic, for adverting to which I have seen much and painful occasion in the history of similar institutions; I mean the mischief of individuals allowing their coöperation to flag on account of slight differences of opinion on the operations of the society. Choose men for its management who have your full confidence; and having chosen, support them cordially in their arduous work. Let no man become indifferent because exertion is not directed either to the particular spot, or in the particular mode, which to him seems preferable. One may prefer working by means of the pulpit, another by the press; the preference of one may be for stated lectures, and that of another for missionary journeys; these may think that our present condition requires the exclusive application of our resources to our own country, while those may believe that some attention to the state and the propagation of pure religion in other and far distant lands is required of us, and will react upon us most beneficially; but it is melancholy to hear of aid withheld and withdrawn, of hostile feelings excited, and of the energy of a society being enfeebled, by the different views which individuals take of such points from those to whom the general body of the contributors have intrusted the conduct of their affairs. With mutual confidence and coöperation, union, decision, and activity, how incalculable are the benefits which your society may confer upon your country! It is for you to reap advantage both from the success and from the errors of your brethren in this country. The history of our societies, and especially of the Unitarian Fund, the most important of those which were amalgamated in the British and Foreign Unitarian Association, shows how much may be done by well-timed efforts to excite the timid believers of an unavowed faith. That institution was of high utility in accelerating and completing the transformation which has taken place of an ambiguous Presbyterianism into an earnest Unitarianism. If the controversial tone of preaching which naturally attended such a change prevailed somewhat too long in our pulpits, the mistake is committed no longer. We have learned that

the exposure of error is but a part of our work, and not the most important part. Even for missionary operations it is needful to preach not only negatively, but positively; not only anti-Trinitarianism, but Unitarian Christianity. Animating displays of the truth and moral power of pure religion are what must be required of your missionaries, and what will enlighten and benefit your countrymen. Let the mists of error be dispelled; but always in order that the truth may be seen in its unclouded glory.

Unitarians of Ireland, exhibit that glory in your own characters and lives, and thus will every man become an eloquent missionary. The foremost position which Unitarians have been accustomed to take in all public questions affecting the civil and religious liberties of their countrymen and the interests of humanity, has done more than all their volumes of elaborate criticism to win the respect of the enlightened and upright of other denominations. The Catholics while they were struggling, the Jews now that they are struggling, for their civil rights, have made our hearts glow with an honest pride by that unhesitating confidence which they have expressed in our aid, whenever needed, and which has never yet been disappointed. And proud shall I be in that day, which, to judge from the feelings expressed to me by some of you, I trust will come, when you, the Unitarians of Ireland, shall declare as one man that you will, throughout your congregations and churches, tax yourselves to the utmost that is required for the support of the ministers of your choice, and not accept any portion, however small, of the public money for that purpose. It is not for dissenters to furnish what may be some day made a pretext and a precedent for augmenting the intolerable burden of ecclesiastical taxation, by adding to it the support of the Catholic priesthood. Little room indeed is there for addition; be your hands clear, and your voices free, to aid the righteous and soon resistless call of an impoverished people for relief from the rapacity of a nominally Protestant hierarchy.

Unitarians of Ireland, with whatever difficulties you may have to struggle for years to come, I firmly trust in Providence that not many generations will pass before your memories will be blessed as those of the men who commenced the regeneration of your noble but afflicted

country. Our principles must prevail, for the word of God has connected them with its own progress and triumphs, and the language which describes its universal prevalence is, that "there shall be one Lord, and his name one in all the earth." They must prevail, for they are in harmony with the intellectual and moral changes which Providence is producing, thereby to lead onwards the human race. If we teach, in opposition to other denominations, that the principles of divine truth are characterised by their simplicity and universality; that the Divine government is conducted for the good of the whole rational universe, and not for the exclusive benefit, the infinite superiority, of a select portion only; that justice is not vindictiveness; and that character must be conducted towards perfection by the acquirement of knowledge, the exercise of a rational devotion, and the freedom of thought, speech, and action,—our teachings are evidently in harmony with that tide of improvement which is now flowing in upon nations and governments, and by which the most massy piles of ignorance, superstition, and absurdity, by whatever earthly buttresses they are propped, must be swept away utterly and for ever. Even should we mistake in these anticipations, we yet rejoice in the prospect that times of trial are coming, which nothing but truth can abide; for let truth prevail, and we are satisfied: and truth must prevail, for God is omnipotent. And that the blessing of the God of truth may rest upon you in rich abundance, is the prayer of a heart that will remember with pure and lasting gratification your cordial greetings, your estimable qualities, and the honourable manner in which you have commenced a new course of zealous exertion, of Christian benevolence, and of public usefulness.

A SERMON.

"But had certain questions against him of their own superstition, and of one Jesus, which was dead, whom Paul affirmed to be alive" (Acts xxv. 19).

THERE is something sublime in the unity of feeling which the return of this day brings with it throughout

Christendom. Millions of minds are fixed on the great fact of the resurrection of Christ; millions of hearts are glowing with the hope of immortality, of which that fact is the divine assurance; millions of voices are blessing God for his unspeakable gift. The world exults in being a redeemed world, and over the grave men raise the song of victory. He who was dead is alive for evermore; because he lives, we shall live also; all shall be made alive in Christ. There is no commemoration which can rival that of his resurrection; its interest is universal and everlasting.

And yet, astonishing as was the nature, and momentous as are the consequences, of that event, we see by the text, which is the language of Festus to Agrippa, describing the question between Paul and his accusers, how a man of superior station and enlightened mind could dismiss the consideration of it with supercilious indifference. Because it was a religious question, and not a philosophical or political question; because it was a Jewish, and not a Roman question,—he at once satisfied, or affected to satisfy, his mind that it could possess but little importance. A short insight into futurity would have shown him how precipitate were his conclusions. Soon were the political differences of Jew and Roman, and the intellectual differences of Greek and barbarian, to be obliterated in the common brotherhood of the disciples of "one Jesus, which was dead, and whom Paul affirmed to be alive." Soon was that obscure and despised name to be repeated with reverence throughout the civilised world; and the thrones of its emperors and the altars of its gods were to be prostrated before the cross of the Galilean. What he deemed a paltry controversy was the commencement of a shock which was to terminate in a mental revolution—a moral creation. Old things were passing away, and all things became new in Christ Jesus.

As Christianity originally, so Unitarianism now, has to strive against ignorance, indifference, and scorn, in order to obtain, not a full reception, but a fair hearing. The discussion of its tenets is regarded by the great mass of the public on the one hand, and by men of education, literature, and intelligence, on the other, as merely a sectarian controversy; and therefore it is regarded with listlessness or with contempt. And if their view of it were correct,

the feeling which they evince might perhaps be justified without much difficulty. The world owes little gratitude to theological acuteness, directed as it has usually been to the letter that killeth, rather than to the spirit that giveth life; and issuing, as it has usually done, in the fabrication of creeds, the alienation of hearts, and the rearing of some petty diversity of faith or forms as the banner of a party, rather than in the practical advancement of those principles of devotion and benevolence by which God is honoured, and mankind purified, exalted, and blessed. But I shall endeavour to show that this view of the Unitarian controversy is not correct; that it does not lay waste the intellect by metaphysical and critical trifling, or desolate the heart by bigotry and bitterness, but that those who treat it as an affair of mere speculation, and those who regard it as one of the commonplace squabbles of sectarianism, and those who allow its importance only to misrepresent its character, and describe its results as injurious and dangerous, are alike mistaken. Nor is it inappropriate to the present day and the present occasion that our attention should be particularly directed to the practical importance of the Unitarian controversy.

It is appropriate to the day, for one object of the Unitarian controversy is to restore to the resurrection of Christ the same prominence in modern preaching that it had in the preaching of the apostles. An erroneous theology has diminished the obvious and peculiar importance of that event. It is too often represented merely as the most splendid miracle amongst many miracles, or we are referred for its worth to its connection with the sufferings of Christ. The apostles made much more of it. With them, proclaiming the resurrection was preaching the gospel. It was the centre of their doctrinal system, as it is of ours. It was with them the essence of Christianity, and the test of discipleship, as it is with us, and with us peculiarly among modern religionists; for, unhappily, we may look far for the churches which rest content, as we do, with the apostolic principle, "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

And the subject is appropriate to the particular occasion contemplated in the present service, the first anniversary of

the Irish Unitarian Christian Society. It should be distinctly understood that they are no merely speculative points, by agreement in which our union is cemented, or to the dissemination of which our zeal is directed. Prove them to be such, and I should say, let us instantly disband ourselves, and consult our own peace and that of the world by dismissing all such questions to their proper sphere, the libraries of the learned, and the studies of the idle and the curious. The justification of our union and our exertions is to be found, and can only be found, in the importance of our principles. The controversy we promote must be a good fight, to vindicate our waging it. I shall therefore be pleading your cause, and advancing your objects, by showing that the Unitarian controversy tends to the liberation of the intellect, the expansion of the affections, and the better regulation of the conduct; that it tends to benefit man in head, heart, and life.

The Unitarian controversy is a warfare for the emancipation of the human understanding. We invite men to inquire into religious doctrines freely and fearlessly. They have too long been told that there are tenets which they must not question, unless they would endanger or forfeit the salvation of their souls. They have too long been enslaved by the apprehension of damnation for involuntary error. No one doubts that it is pernicious for investigation to be biassed or repressed by temporal considerations. When men dare not inquire, lest the results, honestly avowed, should involve the loss of gown, stall, or mitre, with the dignities and emoluments appended thereto, the evil is generally recognised. And what is that evil? That men tamper with their consciences; that they sophisticate to themselves; that they hunt eagerly for proofs, and look away from objections; that their minds lose integrity and vigour as to other spheres of intellectual exertion; that they are false to the cause of truth, and through them its progress is impeded, and its triumphs are postponed. And is the case essentially different if the misguiding or repressing motive, the bribe and the threat, be drawn from a future world? Where is the material difference between telling a man that if he believe a certain doctrine he shall lose his bishopric, and telling him that he shall lose his salvation; between telling him that he shall incur the

frown of his king, and that he shall incur the hatred of his God? The motive operates in the same direction; the difference is, that in the latter case its force is far more crushing. Who can investigate calmly with such an interest at stake? The understanding ought not to be put in this position. Look at the results of this system of spiritual intimidation. Compare theological literature with all other kinds of literature. How poor, and feeble, and petty, and barren, and word-catching, and narrow-minded, and unprogressive, is the appearance it presents! How few and far between are those angel-visits of genius which have irradiated, from time to time, the inferior regions of poetry and politics and science! And this in theology! which is in itself the noblest of all the regions of thought and feeling; which is the first of sciences, or rather which includes all sciences, which pervades them as God pervades the universe, and because God pervades the universe; which supplies their ultimate principles, and appropriates their discoveries, and links them together, like stars in a constellation, into a bright and harmonious and powerful unity; theology, which appeals to the entire soul of man; not merely to the understanding, like science; nor to the imagination, like poetry; nor to the active powers, like the useful arts; but which demands all faculties of thought, feeling, or exertion, and consecrates and exalts and blesses all, making the whole man the temple of God's spirit of wisdom, power, and love; theology, which, instead of chilling and enfeebling and withering the mind, should, and would if unperverted, by its unrivalled sublimity, and intense loveliness, and universal influence, "create a soul beneath the ribs of death," and into the dullest clod breathe the breath of inspiration! It is the proper business of theology to form, and cherish, and develop, and stimulate to their greatest achievements, the highest orders of human intellect. Instead of which, modern theology puts fetters on the soul at the very portals of the temple, and thinks God honoured by the clanking of these mental chains. The writers who have most graced religion, in an intellectual view, have either been rebellious to the creed imposed on them (Taylor denied original sin, Barrow opposed particular redemption), or, like Milton, Locke, and Newton, their minds were trained in another

school, and they brought to theology the vigour which had been nursed by physical, mental, or political science. To impress a foreigner with an exalted, with a correct notion of what the human intellect had been, and had done, in these countries, who would think of selecting our theology? You might take for such a purpose, in a mass, our poets, our philosophers, our statesmen; they would each show that we are "sprung of earth's best blood, have titles manifold;" but no one would dare to put forward our theology. This alone is sufficient to show that there is something essentially wrong. That wrong I take to be the prevalence of a theology which suppresses thought, by threatening mental error with the penalty of eternal damnation. I know that this system appeals to the scriptures. I also know that it is only supported by the perversion of the scriptures. I could show that whenever faith and salvation are connected there, either the faith is a moral quality, not an intellectual act; or the salvation is only a prophecy of temporal deliverance, and not the promise of an eternal heaven. But this is beside my present purpose, and would require discussion far beyond the limits of a sermon. I am only now urging the fact that revelation speaks to man through his reason; and instead of limiting and quelling that reason by telling him that any of its honest conclusions can be a crime to be eternally punished, requires that every man judge what is said, and be "fully persuaded in his own mind." It is in proportion as the intellect is left thus free from the bias of hope or fear that it flourishes in any department. Our noblest species of literature is our philosophy; the second, our poetry; the third, politics; the last, our theology. In each truth is the object; truth in the first, as to the laws of matter and of mind; in the second, truth of description, feeling, and character; in the third, truth as to the tendencies of institutions and measures; in the last, truth concerning God, duty, and futurity. The order of their excellence is precisely that of the degree of mental freedom, freedom from the prospect of reward or punishment as to particular conclusions, which exists in them respectively. There is little or nothing to bias in philosophy. In poetry there are the taste, the passions, and prejudices of the time, so far as these deviate from the common and permanent sympathies of humanity. In

politics there are great temporal interests involved. And in religion there are terrors which few minds can resist, incessantly directed against denial, or even doubt, and therefore against investigation. Hence the order of excellence reverses the order of importance. Hence the timidity, the narrowness, the barrenness of mind which we lament in theology. We strive to break this benumbing spell. We would expose this terrific fallacy. We would raise the slave of creeds into the freeman of Christ. We demand, with him, "Why do ye not even of yourselves judge that which is right?" We sound the trumpet of the gospel, and cry, "Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light." And would not the world be benefited if men could be made to think as freely and as vigorously in religion as they do in other concerns? Have not all great eras of improvement been characterised by a burst of intellectual activity? Was it not thus when Christianity roused the nations from the torpidity of their ancient scepticism and idolatry? Was it not thus when the Reformation was achieved? A pure and rational and liberal theology would exalt the character of any people to the proudest heights of intellectual dignity. This was the soul of the consecrated literature of Judæa. Whether prophets and apostles were theologically inspired or not, their theology inspired them intellectually; it was from heaven, and raised their minds above the world; it gave them a sublimity unapproached by all other philosophers, moralists, and bards. Such should ever be the effect of genuine religion. Such never can be its influence till the bigotry and imposition are overthrown which denounce against what they call heresy and error the pains and penalties of eternity.

While one class of the questions at issue between us and those who call themselves orthodox bears upon the emancipation of the intellect, there is another class which bears not less strongly upon the feelings and affections, and the decision of which in our favour may be fairly termed the emancipation of the heart,—its liberation from the spirit of bondage by that perfect love which casteth out fear, the fear which has torment. If I read aright the New Testament, love is the sum and substance of its religion, the essence of the devotion which it inspires, of the morality which it en-

joins, and of the heaven which it promises. "God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him." But men can never be thus in heart and soul united with their God and their fellow-creatures while they believe that supreme excellence includes such an attribute as vindictive justice—a justice which punishes not for purposes of kindness and correction, but merely on the principle of so much suffering for so much sin, that suffering itself producing more sin, and extending to all eternity; that the greatest sum of happiness, the universal good of his creatures, the greatest good of the whole, which necessarily includes the greatest good of the individual, was never contemplated by the Creator in his work of creation, nor will ever be realised by the operations of his Providence and grace; that the Father is partial—infinitely partial; and out of the mass of conscious existence which he has produced, selects a portion for goodness and happiness, abandoning the rest to remediless and endless anguish; that there are beings in the universe, intellectual, spiritual, mighty, and immortal beings, whose nature, agency, and destiny is evil, unmixed evil; that man comes into the world corrupt to the heart's core, incapable of all good, and that except in those who undergo a certain change, and receive a certain faith, there neither is, nor has been, nor to eternity shall or can be, any thing whatever which, morally, is the proper object of complacence and love; that evil is final in the divine plan, and that there is a region in which depravity and misery shall never cease to reign over millions,—a region of blasphemies and vice, and foulness and hopelessness, and anguish unutterable. Disguise and palliate and equivocate as advocates may for the purposes of controversy, these are the doctrines of orthodox pulpits and orthodox religionists,—the vital, practical doctrines of the faith which millions hold for Christianity. Whatever may be the amiable inconsistencies of individuals, it is impossible, while these tenets are held, for the spirit of Christian love to pervade the land. They may be checked in some degree by doctrines of a different character; they may also be checked by the best impulses of our calumniated nature; but they cannot be neutralised; they are too prominent in the system to which they belong to be without a mighty influence over the heart; and for the annihilation of that influence it is our bounden duty to

struggle. They are a source of slavish fear in religion, which is alike degrading to man who feels it, to the gospel which is represented as working by such base means, and to God who is its object. They are a source of censoriousness and bigotry, which bring upon society a countless train of evils, often perpetrating by word and deed atrocious injustice, and sowing the land with seeds of bitterness. They turn men aside from "doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with their God." They fill the world with contentions, and the death-bed even of their firmest votaries is often a scene of changing emotions, and melancholy apprehensions, and dark despondings, which it is fearful to contemplate. They destroy even the wish for that purer and higher state of affection, that large expansion of the soul, the notion of which seems necessary for the gradual development of love in us; for the heaven of their hopes is a scene of complacent exclusion, which I should say only the hardest and narrowest selfishness could enjoy. Much must be done with men's minds before their hearts become right with God, or right with humanity. Controversy must eradicate the prejudices which impede the growth of their affections. They must be brought into the light, to make them feel the warmth of genuine religion. Many a massy pile of false doctrine must be battered down before theology and morality can be reconstructed on the broad foundations which Christ has laid of universal love. On this principle alone, carried out into all its bearings, do we arrive at the full manifestation of the spirit of the gospel. This is the spirit of Christ, which makes and marks us his; in extending its influence we are advancing his kingdom; and in its final diffusion will the objects of his mission be accomplished.

A third class of questions at issue between us and others relates to various views of repentance, and righteousness, and pardon, and conversion, and heaven, and involves to a large extent the activity which the believer is impelled to put forth, the motives by which he is to be influenced, and the course he should pursue, in this life of probation and preparation.

The greatest power which I can imagine religion to possess, and the most beneficial direction of that power, both for the individual and for the community, are when men

conceive the dignity and happiness of an hereafter to consist in the full development of the intellectual, moral, and social principles of human nature, as constituted by its paternal Creator; when their heaven is a state of exalted attainment, of glowing affection, of beneficent activity, and all holding on an interminable progress through the ages of eternity; and when, as is the natural influence of such a notion as this, they advance towards future bliss by realising here, with all their ability and energy, that which they hope to become in the kingdom of heaven. The men who act on such principles have a constant motive to righteous exertion. They feel how the consequences of whatever they do extend themselves through death into the life to come, and to eternity. They must work while it is day. And their religion pervades all their pursuits. It sanctifies their scientific attainments and their industrious labours. Whatever benefits their fellow-creatures makes themselves more fit for heaven. Whatever purifies and exalts their own characters is heaven commencing in them. Grace and glory are with them but different views of the same thing. The duty and the recompense, instead of a merely positive and arbitrary connection, are inseparable and even identified. Death does not break the continuity of their moral being. They shall be like Christ; and after his resurrection, the moral recognition of him was not more difficult than the physical identification. Here and hereafter their existence is alike directed towards accomplishing the great end of their creation. For this purpose was the gospel proclaimed; for this Christ came, renewing in man the image of his Maker; for this was death abolished; and heaven and earth were united and reconciled, and the kingdom of God was established in all the universality of its spirit, its influences, and its promises.

But this light yet shines in the darkness. This great and glorious work is impeded not only in the world, but in the church; not only by the unbelieving and the profligate, but by the professors of Christianity itself. They first separate man's conversion, *i.e.* his becoming a Christian, from his own exertions. They represent him as made so by a supernatural operation. They divide the effect from the cause, and deny the latter while they desire the former. This is a vain attempt to honour the Deity. He is not less

honoured in the laws of the mental and moral world than he is in the seeming interruption of those of the physical world. He is not less the great agent of the universe in nature than in miracle. There is no good done as to the religious feeling, but much evil as to moral activity. Religion is made passive in its origin. Man is initiated into Christianity by being told that he can do nothing. A false impression is produced, which tends to put him wrong through the whole of his course. He must not attempt by moral acts to generate in himself the spiritual life, but wait for its communication. There is no gradation for him to ascend. It is every thing or nothing; and at this point that every thing must be done for him, and not by him. What can be more calculated to leave the sinner in his sinfulness; to furnish self-justification to the impenitent; to dismay the timid; to puff up with spiritual pride the bold; and to turn all aside from solid, practical godliness to the ever-varying and often deceptive emotions of their minds or their animal frames? And then, when the spiritual life is supposed to be imparted, how is it to be manifested? Here, again, it is too common for them to separate what is called holiness from the real duties of man upon the earth. What constitutes the good and godly man in the common estimation of religionists? It is notorious that the duties which become so simply because they are means, are placed in the very first rank. Heaven forbid that we should undervalue prayer and praise, both private and social; reading the scriptures, hearing sermons: but their worth is in their use. It is our duty to form our characters to the devotion and benevolence which, rightly employed, they may be made so powerfully to promote in us. Their obligation is secondary, not primary; it relates not so much to themselves as to their influences. It is a fearful mischief that they are so often raised, as habit or opinion raises wealth, from being pursued as means for an ulterior object, to being themselves the final object. They do not constitute the good man, the real Christian. How extensively have religionists been alienated from the great duties of social life! Engaged in praying and proselyting, how seldom they act upon the public mind and public institutions and conduct, so as to imbue them with the spirit of the gospel! How else could it be that even the progress of natural science

should still often have to struggle with theological prejudices in Christian countries? that slavery should still exist in Christian countries? that wars should still be waged between Christian nations? that the administration of justice should still be so imperfect under Christian legislation? that many, and some most grinding, oppressions should still be practised in Christian communities? that universal education, whatever approximations are made, should still be so limited, both as to extent and as to the worth of the instruction, as it is in Christian countries? that to all great advances in the state of society there should still be such mighty obstacles as there are in Christian states? that institutions framed and conducted for the express object of elevating the moral, mental, and physical condition of the great mass of the people, should still be almost unknown in the arrangements of Christian nations? In devotion to such aims as these, combined with the diligent cultivation of the personal and domestic virtues, is the Christian character exhibited. But these graft not well on the stock of popular systems; nor have they ever borne, nor seem they ever likely to bear, a harvest of such fruit. They are stigmatised as worldly aims; if they are such, it is in the sense in which, among others, Christ came to save the world, and make his followers the salt of the earth. They are now the largest sphere for those good works without which faith is dead. Were it not the honest blunder of fanaticism, it would be the pitiful excuse of servility or selfishness, that should exclude them from the sphere of religion and morality. The presence of the gospel in a country ought always to be visible by an atmosphere of knowledge, freedom, happiness, and improvement, ever spreading and brightening around it. Nothing can more degrade Christianity than taking this class of actions from under its cognisance because it belongs to business, and that because it belongs to politics, and thus isolating religion from every thing else, and stripping it bare of all its social strength and glory. Whatever benefits men in any of their relations, that is righteousness and true holiness.

Hence the mischief also of the further separation which religionists make between this world and the world to come. They seem to look for happiness rather in a perpetual act of worship than in the continued development of principles

which here are the source of goodness and felicity. Their preparation for it is, therefore, in such exercises. Its hope does not act upon their social conduct. It is not a perpetual impulse to being good and doing good. We do not, and we cannot, trace to their peculiar principles even the great efforts which from time to time are made and making for correcting the errors and evils of the past, and ameliorating the condition of mankind, and leading on the human race in its career of improvement. By mistaking heaven, they lose the glory of making earth the heaven into which it might gradually be transformed. Oh, when will men awake from these dreams? What is sown shall be reaped; and happy they who go forth bearing precious seed, though it be with toil and tears, amid calumny and opposition and scorn, for the result shall be found after many days, and the good of earth may gladden them even in heaven.

You do well, then, and as enlightened, pious, and benevolent men should do, in associating for the promotion, by argument and persuasion, of religious views which will produce a better spirit. You deserve well of Christendom; for you revert, and would induce all believers to revert, to the genuine truths of the gospel. You deserve well of our country; for you would restore to it that noblest prerogative and praise, of teaching the nations how to live. You deserve well of humanity; for you would see it created anew in the moral image of its Maker, and bring glory to God in the highest by peace on earth and good will amongst men.

And in this delineation of social good and social duty we trace also that of individual duty and good. The intellectual, the moral, the active powers, these make up our nature; their diligent and proportionate cultivation is growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. With knowledge in the mind, love in the heart, and usefulness in the life, you must still expect to encounter the anathema of the bigot and the scorn of the worldling; but you may also anticipate that He, before whom you and they must appear, will recompense every endurance by declaring, "Well done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things."

MORAL CAUTIONS ON THE ANTICIPATED APPROACH OF THE CHOLERA.

A Sermon delivered at Finsbury Unitarian Chapel, on Sunday, November 6, 1831.

[1831.]

"Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night; nor for the arrow that flieth by day; nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness; nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday" (Psalm xci. 5, 6).

INANIMATE matter fulfils the laws of its nature, every where and always, with unerring exactitude. From the mechanical principles of bodies, from the laws of matter and of motion, there are no deviations, in the heights or in the depths, on the land or in the water, from the surface to the centre of the globe, over earth or through the heavens,—all is precision and uniformity. The mathematician calculates the magnitude of a planet, its distance from the sun, its relation to other bodies of the same system, and the power and direction of the attraction thence resulting; and he describes on a slip of paper, with a pair of compasses, a peculiar curve, and through that very curve, in that very line, only immensely magnified, that planet rolls in the boundless fields of space. The millions of millions of miles of the reality, and the few inches of his diagram, make no difference in the exactitude of the figure and the certainty of the result. And so it is through all the unconscious physical world. He who spread the heavens and balanced the earth, who weighed the mountains in scales and the hills in a balance, who numbers the sand of the shore and calleth the stars by their names, who is wise in counsel and excellent in working, has subjected this portion of existence to a few unvarying principles, which man may discover, of which he may avail himself for the support, conveniences, and enjoyments of life, and on which he may calculate with

the firmest assurance. That the goodness of this plan is commensurate with its wisdom we have daily and hourly reason to feel. Had the laws of matter been only as difficult to ascertain and calculate upon as at first were those of the mind, the human race must have been supported by a perpetual miracle, *i.e.* by the suspension of those laws, or it would have perished before the requisite knowledge could have been acquired for its safety and support. All unconscious matter, the drop of water, the stone, the ray of light, fulfils perfectly and perpetually the laws of its being and the end of its creation. In that region of existence, disobedience to the Divine will, comprised in those laws, is never to be found: there is neither space for repentance, nor even capability of transgression; and failure is an incongruous and impossible conception.

Now, as man, like the drop of water, the stone, or the ray of light, was created also for a specific purpose, and that of an infinitely more exalted description, it might be hastily imagined that, in his case, the impossibility of ever swerving from the laws of his nature, its moral laws, or of ever failing to answer the ends of his creation, should be equally obvious. Every one knows how very far this is from being the fact. He is made for wisdom, righteousness, and happiness, and yet he continually lives in ignorance and folly, acts viciously, and dies miserably. Even the physical, or rather the more grossly material portion of his constitution, seems by its subjection to his own will to lose something of the privilege of other material being, to be deflected from the will of God, and to forfeit the end of creation. The planets, over which our will has no power, run their eternal circles without weariness or fainting; man's limbs obey not so his strongest volition. "Even the youths shall faint and be weary, the young men shall utterly fall." And it is in a moral, not in a physical sense, that "they that trust in the Lord shall renew their strength, mount as on eagles' wings, run without weariness, and walk without fainting."

Curiously constructed are the organs of our bodies for the discharge of their several functions, the exercise of perception, the production of pleasurable sensation, and the fulfilling, like machinery, of the purposes of our minds. But how often do they become the instruments of annoyance,

of suffering, of agony; baffle the power of intellect, and at length triumph over the principle of life itself, and reduce man, God's noblest work although he be, to the level of the churchyard clod! I shall not go into the general question, the great question of theology,—the question of Evil, its nature, existence, and object; capable though I believe that question to be of a satisfactory solution as to the principle, however many of the details must remain perplexing and mysterious. I shall not now endeavour to show how these seeming irregularities, deviations, and caprices are capable of reduction to laws of a more refined and remote, but not less certain, nature than those of unconscious matter; nor how this apparent failure is God's way, in his infinite wisdom and eternal plans, of real ultimate success, raising all intelligence at last to that purity and bliss which it was created to exemplify. I shall confine myself to a single glance at a particular portion of this large subject, one which just at the present time may be supposed of peculiar interest, and simply ask whether we have any light from religion on the fact, why, for what ulterior reasons in the Divine government, the physical portion of man's constitution is so far remote from that perpetual accordance with the laws and ends of its creation, which we behold in the mountain, sea, or world, or any other unorganised mass of mere matter: in other words, why humanity is subject to pain and disease.

The answer is found in the subordination of body to mind; in its being the means for unfolding, training, and maturing those intellectual and moral faculties which are the highest attributes of our nature. Man, not subject to pain and disease, would be comparatively, if not completely, an unthinking being. He would want one great and common stimulus to reflection. One motive would be withdrawn which often impels him to recall the past, to investigate the present, to anticipate the future. He would have less thoughtfulness, and therefore he would have less moral worth. The immunity of unconscious matter from evil belongs, not to its height, but to its lowness, in the scale of existence. It is incapable of the nobler operations by which man foresees, determines, and avoids. And though the least dignified aim of these operations may be in the avoidance of physical evil, yet that prepares for the

more dignified uses of the same faculties. It helps to educate man for looking forward even to eternity, and for rising into the moral image of God.

For the end of man's creation can only be realised by his own mind and will. By the enlightenment of the one, and the energy of the other, he must ascend towards the perfection of his nature. He grows not good, as the trees grow green in spring; but by understanding what goodness is, and applying himself to the formation of his character, in accordance with its dictates. Therefore he is exposed to a succession of trials. Sometimes his strength is confirmed and augmented by his resistance to temptation; sometimes its deficiency is manifested by his yielding to temptation. He falls with Adam, or he triumphs with Christ; he despairs like Judas, or he repents like Peter. Still the object is to have his character self-formed and matured. It must be wrought out, and refined to excellence, by his own consciousness, his own experience, reflection, will, energy, and perseverance. Moral goodness is of God, as well as physical existence; but it is of God in a different way. In the one case, the will of God is accomplished with mathematical exactness by unconscious obedience; in the other, that will is accomplished by the intentional instrumentality of the intelligent being in whose mind, heart, character, and happiness it is realised.

Physical suffering, disease, constitutes one of the most conspicuous tests of a man's moral state, and therefore eventually one of the most efficient means for improving that state. How very differently does it act, both on those by whom it is endured, and on those who are connected with the sufferer! Some, in either situation, only exhibit a base and grovelling apprehension. They fear dying; they fear contact with the dying. Pain and death are images of terror, against which they close their eyes, forgetting that they are not thereby to be escaped. In others, illness seems only to develop an all-grasping selfishness and inordinate vanity. They use it as a condition of importance and of privilege. It is the pretext with them of taxing others for unreasonable and needless sacrifices, which they think kind feeling cannot then withhold from them. If such persons be not themselves the sufferers, they are bad attendants. Ill fares the patient of whose

inability to minister to their gratification they are impatient. While, thank Heaven, there are those in whom sorrow fulfils its blessed agency of displaying the worth which exists, and conducting towards the excellence which may be attained. How beautiful is the benevolence in which the one endures, and by which the other strengthens the sufferer for that endurance! Forgetfulness of self, and thoughtfulness of others, is nowhere so affecting as on the couch of sickness. A grateful piety can nowhere be a nobler offering to God than when its temple is the chamber of disease, its altar the bed of debility or death. The ministry to individual happiness can scarcely assume a purer form than when embodied in the quiet, prompt, watchful, and ceaseless solicitude which anticipates every want and wish, and becomes, within the sphere of its operations, an incarnation of the care and love of Providence. All this is moral discipline. By this the soul is tried and purified. Those who cannot abide this test have thereby warning, which they should lay to heart, of defects in their moral constitution, which must be remedied before they can be happy. They who do not improve in grief, are not yet ripened for real enjoyment. The tears of sorrow, like the rain of heaven, make the weeds spring up as well as the wholesome plants; they show what there is in the bosom which requires to be eradicated; they indicate the successful practice, or the gross neglect, of moral cultivation. We may say of suffering what Solomon says of study: "This sore travail hath God given to the sons of men to be exercised withal;" and, like every other task which God imposes, it has its certain and rich reward. We follow the Captain of our salvation, who was made perfect through sufferings; we follow him in abiding the test of trials and in being victorious over temptations.

There are seasons when Providence summons to this conflict, applies this test, exhibits these influences, and conducts this discipline on a large and conspicuous scale. Such have seasons of pestilential or prevalent disease ever been. Like political crises, they are "the times that try men's souls." The records of those seasons are memorials of all that is richest and basest, grandest and meanest, purest and foulest, in human nature. They show instances of the soundest judgment and of the grossest folly; of

moral heroism and of despicable pusillanimity; of the most generous devotedness and the most obdurate callousness. They are a sort of moral day of judgment on the earth, when it is seen what and who are worthy, what and who are worthless. The wheat and the tares grow alike luxuriantly, and that very luxuriance justifies the judgment of righteousness, and prepares for the separation of retribution.

And it seems now as if our country, so long favoured with immunity from visitations of this description, were not to escape the ravages of a disease which, arising in its terrors on the banks of the Ganges, has scattered desolation over nearly an eighth part of the surface of the earth. It has reached the shore of this island. We cannot reasonably expect that it should be confined to the spot where it has made its appearance. That is against all experience; which has hitherto shown that no attempt at isolating it, however ably planned or rigorously enforced, could long avail. The great military powers of Russia, Austria, and Prussia have tried such plans to their full extent, and have failed. The following extract from the *Medical Gazette* alleges evidence of their being not only ineffective, but pernicious: "The cordons of Vienna nearly occasioned a civil war; and at Berlin, where they were only maintained by the rigour of strong despotism, the King of Prussia was soon convinced of his mistake, and hastened to repeal those 'sanitary laws' which experience taught him were so fruitless, so expensive, so ruinous to commerce, and so tyrannical. In his proclamation,—dated from Charlottenburgh, Sept. 6, 1831,—he complains that 'the Asiatic cholera had penetrated into his dominions in spite of measures the most rigorous, precautions the most active, and vigilance the most sustained, which had all proved useless and unsuccessful in averting or even checking its progress.' He adds, 'And now, since the disease is in our kingdom, and the eyes of government have been opened by experience, I have ordered the rules hitherto prevailing to undergo a complete revision and a conscientious examination as to all the circumstances worthy of being entertained, in order to arrive at a proper modification of those rules, partly from an acquaintance with the most approved modes of treating the disease, and partly from the exigencies of

the occasion. The rigorous measures of isolation by cordons, established on the frontiers and in the interior of the country, have hitherto acted *unfavourably* on the industrious habits of my people, and threaten, if they be maintained much longer, to destroy the comforts of numerous families, and, in short, to become *more ruinous to the country than the malady itself.*' The Board of Health, at Berlin, was accordingly enjoined to publish forthwith such changes in the 'rules' as their experience had suggested to be beneficial; while meantime the military cordons were almost every where discontinued, and such other restrictions as originated in the (so called) 'sanitary laws' were considerably modified."

It may then be anticipated that this fearful visitant will appear on other points of our coast, will penetrate into the interior of the country, and that we, too, like other nations, have before us a time in which there will be an unusual degree of suffering, trial, death, and mourning.

It is a moral duty, I think, to inquire about the state of mind in which such a visitation should be met, and by which it will be mitigated. To that particular view of the subject I shall now confine myself. Medical suggestions and municipal regulations are matters of consideration elsewhere. Let them be attended to, and well and thoroughly canvassed in the proper place and by the proper persons. Our concern here is with the mental and moral preparation against the invasion of our shores by this dreaded enemy.

1. If it must come, let not its approach be rendered more formidable by the exaggerations of a terrified imagination, and the consequent want of calmness, clearness, and presence of mind. There is no occasion to ring such an alarum in every parish and hamlet as shall "fright the isle from its propriety." Distance diminishes objects to the sight; but if they be objects of apprehension, it magnifies them to the mind. They are seen through a mist. Mournful as the truth must be, there has yet, in the present case, been much of exaggeration, which the reflecting man will easily detect. He will note this. He will observe, too, the more favourable circumstances in the habitations and modes of living of all above the lowest class in this country for resisting disease: its vast superiority over

many parts of the Continent. He will advert to the striking fact that, two or three centuries ago, this very disease was known here, with a fatality like what it now possesses abroad; but which we have reason to hope it has lost here by the improvement in the condition of the people which has taken place in the interval. Such considerations, aided by that calmness of mind which religion bestows, even in case of the worst, will enable men to contemplate the possible evil in the full exercise of reason and judgment. They will look at it like men and Christians. They will not be betrayed by unmanly terrors into absurd, impracticable, and mischievous attempts for the security of their own persons and families, thereby producing or aggravating the general confusion. The diffusion of such a spirit as this, the spirit of a sound mind, may save our country from much of peril and of misery; and with it the individuals and families where it is exercised.

2. If it must come, let it not impair or pervert our piety; let it not degrade the character of our devotion. If pestilence raged around us in forms far worse than there is reason to apprehend; if towns were depopulated, and the rank grass grew in the streets of cities, and loved ones fell by our side, and the dead were left to bury the dead,—it would not be the less true that God is love, the almighty Father, the universal Father, the everlasting Father. Some would blaspheme the more, and profane the name of their Maker; some would tremble and crouch before his supposed vindictive wrath; but Christian faith would love and trust and bless amid the desolation. Filial piety to God is not a mere sensation, produced by the immediate action of some external, pleasurable cause. It is not like the torrent, mighty after showers, and vanishing in the drought; but the ever-flowing stream, fed from a living fountain. If plague or pestilence be a reason why God is not a being of boundless love and mercy, and the object of ceaseless, grateful piety, why, let us overturn our altars now, and close our temples, for such things have been in the world again and again. The good will not predominate the less, nor be less the ultimate result of all, when we are suffering the evil, should we be called to its endurance. And as this is the right (though it may be difficult) feeling of endurance, so is it, and more easy, of

anticipation. Let us look forward in the light of divine love. If the peril come, it has its mission; it comes from God, and for his purposes. If so we anticipate, we may be sure that to us it will be a mission of mercy. We shall not be afraid, for we shall have nothing to fear. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him;" and that trust is amply justified, and will be gloriously rewarded.

3. If it must come, let it not turn us from our duties. That "self-preservation is the first of duties," is a maxim that will probably be heard from many mouths; it is only true in a higher interpretation than they would probably consent to give it. The self to be preserved is not only our physical, but our moral being. There are continually much higher duties imposed upon us than the avoidance of bodily peril. The common notions of contagion, and the personal apprehensions resulting from them, have generated a world of baseness and suffering, by the extent to which they have caused the desertion of the sick, their abandonment to such care as could be purchased, and the absence of the thousand alleviations which can only be ministered by friendly hands. He only effects self-preservation who does his duty; and then, even in death, he has saved all of self that is worth preserving. Oh, may no claim of affection, friendship, blood, or neighbourhood be obliterated from any heart by this scourge, if it should pass over the land! Where there *is* peril of infection, it is ever least to those who meekly brave it, in reliance upon God, and in the discharge of duty. Its existence is commonly overrated. Ten physicians at Warsaw inoculated themselves from patients suffering with the cholera, and with impunity. Blessings on their heroism! The sick had reason to bless them; so has the world.

4. If it must come, let it not deaden our charities. There will be preëminent need of their life and energy. Such times are too apt to close up and harden men's hearts. They contract themselves into that narrow circle within which they hope the enemy will not be able to force an entrance. But the poor, the amelioration of whose condition should be seldom absent from the good man's mind, will be likely to suffer the most under such a visitation. In his more customary forms, death may be impartial. He is privileged not to respect persons or station. But the

mode in which circumstances compel the poor to live, marks them out for the visitations of contagious or epidemic disease. It should mark them out also for a thoughtfulness and charity which will stand erect in the storm, whatever else is levelled. They will need to be cared for; and He who may command destruction to waste them at noonday, also commands that morning, noon, and night shall charity repair the waste. It should anticipate the evil on their behalf; and in the hearts of Christians should the spirit of the gospel say, with its Author, when he wept over the coming calamities of the outcasts of Jerusalem, "I would gather thy children as the hen gathereth her chickens under her wings."

5. If it must come, still the worst to its victims is but the brief ante-dating of that death which must come to all. We have not now to learn that death is our inevitable lot, and might, were there no such disease in the world, be our speedy lot. His arrow ever flieth, by day and by night. It is only the difference of more or less, later or sooner. The year, month, week, day, would have its victims, though this terror had never reached our shores. A certain number of additional deaths does not change the form and character of death as contemplated by Christianity. The trial, the consolation, the hope: these are all the same. The grave is still within the dominion of Providence. Sin is still the sting of death; and Christ is still its conqueror. The song may still be sung, "Thanks be to God, who hath given us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" Still is it the fact, that "this mortal shall put on immortality." And still the promise stands sure, that "the faithful unto death shall inherit a crown of life." Let it not, then, be counted so very strange a thing. Even could we foresee our own individual destiny, and read our own names in the list of those who shall sleep, our care should be that we may sleep in Jesus; our inference and impulse be to "work while it is day, for the night cometh, in which no man can work."

6. If it must come, so also must come the kingdom of God, and his glory, and the victories of truth and righteousness, and the advance of the human race, under the guidance and blessing of Providence, to the fulfilment of their

glorious destiny, here and hereafter. It cannot be more certain than that; it is not *so* certain. If it must come, it must also pass away; but that will come, and will not pass away. The night must give place to the day, but there shall come a day which no night shall follow. When God shall take to himself his great power, and reign in the hearts of his rational creatures, it will be for evermore.

Father of mercies, in peril or security, health or sickness, life or death, be our confiding prayer, "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven!" Amen.

THE CLAIMS OF THE POOR ON THE FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST.

A Sermon preached at Finsbury Unitarian Chapel, November 13, 1831, *on behalf of the Unitarian Association, and for the purpose of enabling its Committee to establish Missions to the Poor of large Towns, on the plan pursued so successfully by Dr. Tuckerman, of Boston, U.S.*

[1831.]

"For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always" (John xii. 8).

Many parts of this great metropolis—and the observation applies, in different degrees, to other cities and large towns—present a sight which is imposing to the eye and pleasant to the mind; but in which we can only feel unmixed complacency while we forget the melancholy contrast to which a few paces may conduct us. We gaze on spacious streets, gay terraces and crescents, and stately squares. We know that the pomp, and ornament, and luxury, and festivity within correspond with the external appearance. There are the costliest productions of modern art, and the noblest relics of ancient genius. There, according to the varying character of the inhabitant, is all that can be purchased to minister to sense, passion, or intellect. There, menials within and equipages without extend the volition of the master over time and space; enabling him to say, "Do this, and it is done;" and the chief toil with which he is taxed seems that of willing. And at hand are the ever-open mart, the diversified bazaar, and the long line of individual competitors, displaying all that industry has produced, or art has invented, or commerce imported, glittering in endless variety and profusion. And at intervals rise the public buildings which tell of the diffusion of science, the amusements of society, the enactment of laws,

the administration of justice, and the worship of God. The feelings which arise are those of admiration and complacency; the associations suggested are those of civilisation, refinement, taste, order, intelligence, enjoyment, grandeur, and prosperity.

Turn aside but a little, and you come into close-built streets, and yet narrower lanes and alleys, where the dismantled dwellings bear every mark of populous wretchedness. There are noisome smells, and loathsome sights, and disgusting sounds, from which the senses shrink. Here, too, we are aware that the outward appearance is a true index of that which is within; of a gradation whose highest point is the hard and ceaseless toil that humbles humanity into an automaton, with little more than the one sense of weariness and suffering, working for that which barely supplies sufficient strength to enable it to work on; and the lowest point, a depravity whose depths the imagination cannot sound without pollution. Here the human form and face are withered by the grasp of physical evil. Disease abides in these lurking-places, driven thither like a wild beast to its lair, and sustaining itself till the season when it may again stalk forth to terrify. The schoolmaster who is most abroad there teaches lessons of which ignorance is bliss. The very children are initiated into the arts of fraud, theft, and violence. Horrid tales are told of premature licentiousness. The Sabbath sun penetrates not through the mist of their miseries and abominations. To the higher orders of society they feel themselves slaves or enemies—perhaps both—and are ever ripe and ready for vindictive hostilities. Intoxication, in its most maddening form, is the most coveted enjoyment. And in passing on, by haunts of wretchedness and dens of vice, the emotions which rise are those of pity, apprehension, disgust, almost despair of man; the associations, those of barbarism, brutality, anguish, confusion, and guilt.

Such are the extreme evils of poverty in cities, and such is the appalling contrast which presents itself to the senses, the judgment, and the heart, and which ought long ago to have raised the question, *Must* these things be? in a voice of thunder which would have enforced an answer. It is childish to shrink from the steady contemplation of

the fact, that there are thousands upon thousands, in this vast and wealthy city, most wretchedly clothed and fed and lodged; ignorant and idle, dissolute and wicked; some born in this state, and others pressed down into it from a better; and by their herding together, augmenting the contagiousness of the moral pestilence by which their souls are contaminated. It is worse than childish to rail at their depravity; they do but fulfil the destiny which is imposed on them by society; they do but exhibit the tendencies of the circumstances in which they are placed, and of which they are the victims. What may become their crime was first their calamity. And there is no calamity like that of abandonment to physical privations, mental darkness, bad passions, corrupting associates, strong temptations, and the perpetual presence of a more favoured class of society, which, as they too often find, they yet oftener believe, to be supercilious, hostile, or heartless.

It does not relieve the pressure of these facts upon the mind—it aggravates the pain, though it may lighten the disgust—to reflect on the beautiful outbreakings of moral good, the touching instances of integrity, disinterestedness, kindness, self-sacrifice, which are sometimes apparent even amid the worst of these scenes; and to believe, as we may, that there are many more such instances which shall have no publicity till the day of retribution, and are nowhere written but in God's book of remembrance. These are but manifestations of those moral capabilities which, even among the vilest, are universal. They show what precious materials are thrown down and trampled on in the streets, there to become so offensive that we call for coercive and even vindictive legislation to sweep away the pollution, when it were better to employ the moral alchemy that should detect their inherent qualities, however obscured in this vile transformation, and reproduce them in their original lustre.

Again I ask, Must these things be? Is this sickening contrast to be everlasting? Is there no remedy, no alleviation? Is there no better order of things predestined in the plans of Providence? And are we only to hope and to wait? Are we to *do nothing?* Usually, what Providence decrees, man does. Good men's hopes, however remote, are at length realised by good men's exertions. If

they "serve who only stand and wait," it is because their quiescence is commanded. Else should they join those who by

> "thousands at his bidding speed,
> And post o'er land and ocean without rest."

The Christian inherits the motto of his Master, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The prolonged existence of evil requires the continued energy of goodness for its correction. The one is a reason for the other, and implies its moral, though not its legal, obligation. In the Christian code, where there is misery, mercy is a duty. According to its dictates, charity is like prayer, "right, fit, and our bounden duty;" not a matter of spontaneous practice or neglect, which involves no responsibility. And whatever may be thought of theories of human nature and society, it is a practical certainty that to the evils of poverty, as it exists especially in cities, there are antagonistic powers which the Christian may and ought to call into exercise. The occasion, the moral necessity, constitutes his obligation, and impels our enforcing *the claims of the poor on the followers of Christ.*

I speak of the followers of Christ, if not exclusively, yet preëminently, because in the gospel is to be found the mightiest counteractive influence to the evils of man's condition on the earth, and that which includes, blends, and gives the amplest scope, the best direction, and the surest success, to all the rest. There is an antagonistic power to the miseries of poverty in the constitution of our nature, the sympathies of humanity. We are framed to feel the pain we see—slightly, it may be, but not so slightly as to be powerless. Appealing to no higher principle, we might yet tell such well-authenticated and easily verified tales of the unnatural mortality of untended infancy, and the long dying of untended age, and of the aggravations by penury, cold, and hunger, of "the common ills which flesh is heir to," as would touch every bosom, and

> "Wing the willing hand that comes
> With succour from the heart."

And let these sympathies be cherished. They were implanted as guardians within us of our brethren's rights. They are as tribunes in our bosoms who uplift their voices

against the despotism of a hard-hearted selfishness. Let their remonstrances be regarded, and their dictates obeyed, by those who possess the conveniences and comforts of life. But this principle needs enlightenment and direction to render it most efficient. Individual charity is often unavailing and often mischievous, from the limitation of its views. By not going to, by not perceiving, the root of the evil, it often multiplies what it would mitigate. It is corrected by a higher antagonist power to the evils of poverty, that of improvement in civil institutions. Here is machinery to do far greater good, with far greater certainty. The arrangements of society may surely be so modified as that, though comparative poverty may remain, yet its pestiferous atmosphere shall, in a great degree, be purified. Such hopes are not now the mere day-dreams which they were when Sir Thomas More wrote his *Utopia*. They are rapidly advancing towards that solid and practical consistency which every intelligent and benevolent man should endeavour to assist them to attain. Wallace's *Prospects of Mankind*, the *Social Contract* of Rousseau, the speculations of Godwin, the wild agrarianism of Spence, the paternal school of Pestalozzi, the prophecies of the Millennarians, the coöperative system of Owen, and, far above all in distinctness and rationality, the social anticipations of St. Simon, are so many manifestations of a spirit labouring with a mass of incumbent difficulties; like the lion in Milton's creation, struggling to get free from the soil in which it was generated, with the assurance of ultimately succeeding, and running its natural race. Let the sufferings and degradation over which we mourn make us more intent upon the truth, the pole-star of social conduct, that "the great object of public institutions should be the amelioration of the condition, physical, intellectual, and moral, of the poorest and most numerous class." But we must ascend higher yet. Institutions are only forms; a spirit must be infused to give them life and power; and that spirit is the gospel of Christ. Our religion sanctifies, guides, elevates, and crowns with blessing, the sympathies of the man and the labours of the citizen. It prompts them to their proper office. It acts by them and through them. And, moreover, it has a direct and peculiar agency of its own, seeking and saving that which was lost, and

bringing back the wanderer, the prodigal, and the sinner, all who are afar off, to dwell with their brethren in their Father's house.

And how is this to be done? Obviously not by the common means of keeping alive a sense of religion in the heart, and sustaining its power, and demonstrating its mercies; for the poor of cities are very much out of the reach of these means. We build and support our places of worship, or inherit those raised for us by the pious zeal of our forefathers, and we assemble there for moral instruction and religious services adapted to our habits and modes of thought: but they come not; they will not come, and they cannot come. Within a circle of two miles in diameter from this spot, there are thousands whose presence here, in any considerable number, would startle the regular attendants almost as much as the first irruption of some northern tribe did one of the cities of ancient Italy. Nor could they be interested without previous mental preparation. Religion the want of humanity, and the claim of humanity upon the Christian, must be borne to them. Men must be found who will preach the gospel, not in churches or chapels, but from house to house; not to congregations, but to individuals. They have a right to religion; and though they know it not, we do, and should see that their ignorance forfeits not their privilege. The child needs, and therefore has a claim for, moral training, for being brought up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. More or less perfectly we may hope that this they have who belong to Christian parents, assembling here and in similar places. In their infancy they breathe what is at least comparatively a pure moral atmosphere. But how are the children of the poor of cities to be brought up in the way they should go? If they knock, the door of the Sunday-school may be opened unto them; but should philanthropy wait for that? Should there be no interposition to stay them in their downward progress, and take them by the hand, and lead them to the fountains of instruction? Very rare, as yet, are schools that are adapted to the exigency. But whatever exist, or whatever be created for the purpose, something more is required: there is need of some one to make the benefit felt, and see that the benefit is realised. In different ways associated with one another, we have our alleviations

of sickness and sorrow. Each has the sympathy of his circle, be it wide or limited, high or low. And the poor, who are with us and of us, have their privations made more endurable, and kindly aid for their peculiar trials is anticipated by them without disappointment. Not so is it in dark and dirty courts, where the air is pent up by close and lofty houses, in which each apartment is the receptacle of a family, some sick, perhaps, and all ragged and famishing, and with none near or qualified to help either mind or body, to sympathise, counsel, relieve, and restore. Christian benevolence must explore and invade these regions. It should go armed with the weapons of its holy conquest; with the means at command which may minister at once to bodily and mental wants, revive the drooping frame, and remould the softened heart. Our religious instructions necessarily dwell much in generalities. It can scarcely be otherwise; and they are addressed to those who can for themselves make the requisite application. But in this mission every thing must be individualised. Each mind and character must be probed, and dealt with according to its peculiar state. There must be the specific instruction, direction, warning, consolation, which the case requires. That voice which in the gospel speaks from heaven to universal man, must narrow its declarations into the form, "I say unto thee." Thus best can the neglected soul be won, and the fountains opened of penitential tears, and the light of divine knowledge be gradually let in upon the darkened mind, and strength from on high be imparted for conflict with temptation, and beings of mere animal existence become instinct with spiritual life, and behold their God, so long and so utterly unknown, and feel his peace shed abroad in their hearts, and, in a moral sense, the wilderness and the solitary place be made glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose.

Now, let it not be said that all this is very good and beautiful and desirable, but that it is not practicable; for it has actually been done. Dr. Tuckerman, of New England, a man of superior mind and attainments, as well as of a benevolent zeal most ardent and persevering, has been for several years thus engaged at Boston, and with such success as amply to warrant, and imperatively to demand, a repetition of the experiment in this country. Hundreds of

wretched families have been relieved, instructed, and gladdened by his paternal visits. Children have been snatched from the very jaws of destruction, redeemed from the otherwise inevitable doom of vice and crime, and afford the fair promise of being useful, respectable, and happy members of society. Unexpected comfort, like an angel descending from heaven, has reached those who had passively resigned themselves to a despair with which it seemed vain longer to struggle. The intemperate and profligate have been reclaimed. And by means of his reports, the rich have been scarcely less benefited than the poor by his labours: the knowledge of what poverty is has been brought home to them; a new road has been opened from one extreme of society to the other; and opinions and feelings have in consequence arisen, which cannot but accelerate the progress of society towards the forms it must assume under the full influence of Christian principles.

That America is not England, and Boston is not London, and what has succeeded there may yet fail here, is a very obvious objection; and so are many other objections, on the difficulty of finding such agents as are needed, and on various points of detail which might be mentioned. But because they *are* points of detail, not affecting the principle of the mission, I shall not enter upon a discussion of them, which would lead us astray from the object of this discourse. They have been carefully and thoroughly and patiently considered by the Committee of the British and Foreign Unitarian Association. That Committee was instructed by its constituents at the general meeting held at Manchester in 1830 to inquire into the practicability of the plan. During a large portion of the following twelvemonth it had their earnest and anxious attention. At the last anniversary, held in this place, the result appeared in their full conviction of its practicability, and in the adoption by the meeting of a resolution that it should be carried into effect. And I believe that nothing but the want of the requisite funds can prevent its being in operation before the next anniversary of that institution. I waive, therefore, a long and unprofitable discussion of details. I appeal to your hearts and minds on the great principle. I ask, Will you do this for the poor of this city, and thereby, perhaps, by the force of example, the stimulus of success, and the evidence of blessed

usefulness, do it for every city and large town in the kingdom? I implore mercy and kindness for them from your human sympathies. I require of your public principles something towards the renovation of society, and the more fair and equal distribution of its advantages. I urge upon you the claims, the moral claims, of your injured, wretched, and degraded brethren; and, as the followers of Christ, demand of you, in the name of Christ, JUSTICE FOR THE POOR.

For has not He whom Christ revealed as your Father, as the universal Father, thereby constituted all mankind brethren? And is not a brother's claim that of sympathy, and protection, and care, and help, and active affection? Is not the doctrine made yet more palpable by the fact of common origin and descent, by natural identity, so beneficently ordained, when he made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on the face of the earth? It was on *man* that the grant of earth's lordship was conferred, the heritage of the human race; and shall not they have so much of its produce as will support existence? The Christian law is, "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Ask of Christ, Who is my neighbour? One of old put the question, and you know the answer. "Go and do likewise." Who shall dare even by inertness and indifference, though they feel nothing of the spirit of exclusiveness, to make divine truth a monopoly and a privilege, when the very tenure on which we hold its blessings is, "Freely ye have received, freely give"? Who of you does not profess to love God? But, says the apostle, "Whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" Talk we of faith? It is shown by works; and these are works by which it is shown. Is knowledge given us; and have they no right at our hands to have a ray let in upon the dungeon of their ignorance? Are the comforts of life bestowed by Providence upon us; and have they no claim on us for immunity from the physical privations of which they experience the bitter endurance? Is our path hedged up by moral restraints to keep us from the regions of vice and danger; and have they no claim for our cautions, our directions, our righteous influence? Have we that gospel which was

to be preached to every creature; and shall we not even send it to those who perish at our very doors? We anticipate judgment, immortality, heaven; that is, we anticipate, and we must make it truth, that Christ, both judge and brother of mankind, shall say, "Forasmuch as ye did it unto these, ye did it unto me." We hope for the final restoration of all to holiness and happiness; have not those within the reach of our influence a claim upon us that we minister to their restoration *now?*

This mission is in the very spirit of the gospel. In the text, Christ rebukes Judas for his hypocritical pretence of charity, when he was not caring for the poor, but wishing to appropriate the cost at which a penitent showed her gratitude. It has been unreasonably extended into an assertion of the necessary perpetuity of a state of poverty on the earth. Were it so, I should say the next sentence assigns the cause. If we have the poor—the moral and physical evils of poverty—always with us, it is because we have not Christ always with us, in the spirit and power of his religion. In proportion as the one is present, the other retires. Let him but be with us, in the influence of Christian principle on individual mind and social institution, and the poor cease to be with us, the present unmitigated wretchedness of poverty is annihilated. The rich and the poor will approximate in the common brotherhood of humanity.

Much has already been done, but much remains to be done, for the full accomplishment of Christ's mission. It devolves upon his followers from age to age to do their part in carrying on the great work, and blessing man on earth while they prepare him for heaven. You will do yours on this occasion, by your contributions to the collection which will be made at the doors, for the purpose of so enlarging the funds of the Unitarian Association as that its Committee may forthwith commence the trial of this wise and beneficent plan. You will thus enable them to send forth men whose office shall be more like that of the apostles and evangelists than can possibly be that of a stated ministry in the present condition of society in this country. Their work will bear a humble but honourable resemblance to that of their great Master. "The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach glad tidings to the

poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord." And soon may your well-timed liberality be nobly recompensed by results of usefulness and blessedness, the narrative of which shall make you, with no unworthy accommodation of the words, devoutly exclaim, "This day is this scripture fulfilled in our ears!"

A DISCOURSE

ON OCCASION OF

THE DEATH OF RAJAH RAMMOHUN ROY.

[1833.]

The following Discourse was delivered at Finsbury Chapel, South Place, on Sunday, October 14, 1833; and is published at the request of the congregation, and in testimony of the feelings by which both preacher and hearers were influenced towards the extraordinary man whom it commemorates.

"Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will show thee" (Gen. xii. 1).
"And he went out, not knowing whither he went" (Heb. xi. 8).

The history of Abraham, in its general outline at least, is confirmed by a considerable variety of evidence, internal and external, written and traditionary, direct and inferential; and the narrative is of great interest and importance, in its connection with both the progress of society and the dispensations of revealed religion. The patriarchal polity and mode of life, and the patriarchal faith and worship, are instructive chapters, the one in the temporal, and the other in the spiritual, annals of mankind. To some minds it is more interesting, and on the present occasion it is more appropriate, to turn from the literal meaning and bearings of the narrative to that typical view of it, in which his character and destiny prefigure those of an illustrious class of reformers, the men who, in various and far-distant climes and ages, have borne a solitary, or almost solitary, testimony against the pervading corruptions of their times, and whose intellectual and moral superiority, though they might not avail to shield them from privation and persecution, yet rendered their testimony as beneficial to others as

it was honourable to themselves. Such men have there been, both in ancient and modern times, in Eastern and Western regions—simple, pure, high-minded, and philanthropic—mighty, not so much by the active energy with which they wielded the weapons of political authority or of proselyting zeal, as by their faithful testimony; witnesses for God and goodness to the world; born, like Christ, to bear witness to the truth; recording pillars, whose gracefulness and strength attracted men to read the deep inscription which they bore uneffaced through the injuries of violence, the corrosions of time, and the desolations of a deluge of apostasy, corruption, and depravity.

The world is full of parallels, analogies, harmonies—the physical and the moral world—each in itself, and each in its countless relations with the other. They pervade all material forms, and all modes of thought and feeling; they link together all facts and fancies, the past and the future, the natural and the supernatural; the reflected form of heaven's stars is in the depth of our waters, and in the moon's eclipse we see the shadow of earth upon the face of heaven. In the transformation of the insect has been read the revival of humanity. The Egyptian mythos of the serpent darkly foretold the discomfiture of the principle of evil. Christ was the Prophet like unto Moses, and he was the second Adam. As one star differeth from another star in glory, so also is the resurrection of the dead. Nature is full of mysteries, of which reason is the hierophant. Revelation itself teaches, not by dogma, but by fact—by fact exhibiting the truth and guiding the investigation. And if we are told that this principle has been abused, in theology, to the employment of the grossest sophisms, and the upholding of the absurdest tenets, we reply, that so have been the strictest forms of ratiocination; and if we are told that these correspondences in nature, history, and revelation are not logical proofs, we reply, that we appeal not to them as such,—we regard them as the suggestive poetry of God's works and ways, which, like all poetry, has truth for the soul of its beauty and of its power, and can be neglected by those only who have imperfect notions of the noblest capabilities of our nature, and the noblest enjoyments of our mortal and our immortal destiny.

These harmonies, however disregarded in the critical or

strictly logical investigations of a defined dogma, yet bring home to the imagination and feelings, and, through them, to the intellect also, the universal agency of that benignant Intelligence in which we live, move, and have our being. If they do not prove a Deity, according to the dialectics of the schools, they make us feel his presence afar and near, above and below—the presence, not of such a God as superstition fancies, shuddering at its own creations, nor such as metaphysical creeds describe, hard, cold, and barren of love and joy as their own uncouth propositions, but that of the Father Almighty, the loving Parent of humanity, and of universal being. They open a communion with the Author of our existence which is not merely with our reason, or with our fears, but with our entire spiritual nature, sanctifying and stimulating and exalting every faculty, and making them all redolent of life and hope. Of those who cherish the perception of them, it may be truly said that they

> "with God himself
> Hold converse, grow familiar day by day
> With his conceptions, act upon his plan,
> And form to his the relish of their souls."

And amongst these correspondences, and reproductions of the same principle under dissimilar forms, and in unexpected regions of being, not the least remarkable is that which obtains in human character. Waiving all others, how obvious is that which we commenced with noticing—the fact that the patriarch is the type and pattern of a class of reformers and benefactors of the world, who, though diversified by individual and national peculiarities, yet bear the same broad characteristics, and of whom we hope that similar endowments and similar usefulness will herald a like ultimate personal recompense, and that as they blessed others upon earth, so in heaven they shall themselves "be blessed with faithful Abraham."

Abraham was an Oriental; and whatever the nation of the individual, I apprehend that an Orientalism of nature and mental character belongs to this class of reformers. I mean by Orientalism, a tendency towards the spiritual, the remote, the vast, the undefined, as distinguished from the microscopic and grovelling intellect, which looks only upon earth, sees only in detail, and comprises all philosophy in

the calculations which most directly solve the questions, "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" The men whose monuments rise on the ascending path of human improvement, like "towers along the steep," beneath which the tide of time has hitherto beaten in vain, have always had loftier and wider views than these. They have seen and foreseen what to others was only a shadowy distance; and even Socrates, who brought down philosophy from the clouds to the business of mankind—the Utilitarian of antiquity—had his inspiring demon; a mode, perhaps, of admonishing his disciples that there are impulses and influences of higher origin than *those* perceive whose spirits are incarcerated in the gross material world. Of Christian reformers and philanthropists most evident is it, that this Oriental spirit is upon their spirits, for they imbibe it in the religion itself. Our Bible is Eastern; it finds or creates an affinity in those whom it vests with a power and a commission to enlighten, exalt, and bless the souls of their contemporaries.

Another mark of this type is the departing, always figuratively, and often in a literal sense, from the paternal home, and the shrines in which worship the family or the countrymen of him to whom, in his youth, God speaks, that he may benefit mankind. For such light springs up in the darkness. It implies a conscientious originality of thought. There must be the clearness and the boldness which consanguinity is not likely to have anticipated, which society is not likely to recognise, and which, as in the first instance they display the mental strength of the individual, next subject his moral strength to a severe and painful trial. Parent, child, friend, countrymen, all clinging to the superstitions against which the reformer bears his testimony, become instruments of torture, agonising in proportion to the superior susceptibilities of his nature; perhaps, by the very operation of trying and wounding him through his sympathies, expanding and refining those sympathies, so as to contribute to his better qualification for the work of generous but ill-requited beneficence which he was created to accomplish.

Such men make their pilgrimage as did the patriarch, in one sense, "not knowing whither." It often leads them to lands they little thought to visit, to a mental path they

little expected to trace, to exertions and associations they little thought to make or form, to conclusions which once their minds would have deemed appalling, to some unexpected rest of faith for their spirits, and perhaps an unexpected grave for their mortal bodies. They know, as Abraham knew, whither they go in this particular, that it is where truth and conscience and benevolence shall lead; they have the faith which, knowing this, deems it knowledge enough, a sufficient revelation of futurity, such as the Saviour used not only for his own strength, but for his disciples' consolation, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know:" and that way known, that path illumined, they are content it should lead through unknown regions, covered with clouds and darkness.

I will only mention more, that in such men's views, if chiefly directed to scientific and social improvement, there has usually been involved a recurrence to some sublime simplicity of principle, from the forgetfulness of which error and injury had been occasioned. In theology, the reformation has generally related to the Divine nature and character, and has been a protest against some modification of polytheism or idolatry. All great eras of religious improvement have been a return towards the simplicity of that faith in One Infinite Spirit of which Abraham was the patriarchal confessor. The losing sight, doctrinally or practically, of the Divine Unity has been the source of almost all corruptions and debasements of religion, whether among Jews or Gentiles, in ancient or modern times. That "there is one God," truism as the assertion may seem to us, is in reality a proposition so full of truth and so exclusive of error, so rich in devotion and so hostile to superstition, that under some modification or other, in some application or other of it to the details of faith and practice, it has always been deeply enshrined in the souls of spiritual reformers. Whenever and wherever such men arise, their lives, characters, and influence are deserving of our earnest study—whenever and wherever they die, their loss is to be lamented, and their memories are to be cherished. And so be it with him, the unexpected termination of whose career has occasioned the feeling which pervades this assembly, and in whom were visible the image and superscription of that excellence which I have been describing, and which, first in

distant report and then in personal observation, our hearts recognised in the Rajah Rammohun Roy.

Strange is it that such a man should have been given by India to the world—by India, the conquered and reconquered, the despised, enslaved, corrupted, and permanently subjugated India; that in a country so grossly and senselessly idolatrous should have arisen so enlightened an assertor of the unity and spirituality of God; that from a people so timid, servile, and abject, crouching in the dust for ages to one foreign domination after another, and kissing every foot that spurns or tramples on them, should have sprung one whose heart beat high and strong with the love of political liberty—sympathising with the free in their distant struggles, and cherishing for his own country the only hope which would not make ashamed, that of instruction as the herald of political regeneration. Strange that, in a region of impurity and falsehood, where licentiousness is not merely tolerated, but sanctified; and where the natural vices of slavery—equivocation and deception—are rife in all ranks, one should have grown up so holy and simple, so free from each debasing taint, as if consecrated from his birth to the God of purity and truth. Strange that amongst a greedy and avaricious race, who, if they covet not the sword of their masters, have yet imbibed their craving after gold—who seek its acquisition by all arts, from shameless oppression to shameless perjury, preying even on their own poor plundered country—should have been found one who so early perceived what was better far than riches, and willingly saw his prospects darkened by the interposition of that brighter orb which had risen upon his mind, which was thenceforth to be his guiding star, although he knew not yet that it would lead him to the cottage of the babe of Bethlehem; and who, when his years of toil and privation were over, and a rare affluence was showered into his bosom, showed that he "knew how to abound," by its devotion towards all the purposes of the purest and most enlightened philanthropy. Strange that in the proudest and most selfish tribe of the land of Caste—which arrogates a diviner origin than the rest of the community, and unscrupulously makes the rest subsidiary to its pleasures, its cupidity, and its arrogance, legislating for the Brahmin with a recklessness of all inferiors' rights, to which there is

nothing comparable even in the worst insolence of feudality —should have been born one in whose heart men's common nature and equal rights seem ever to have been recognised; whose own soul was such a revelation to him of the universal brotherhood of humanity, that he read it every where, even in the reveries of Brahminical theology, and became its advocate and missionary before the voice of the apostle had told him it was the word of God. Strange that from that exclusive and restricted land—where the selfish interest alike of the native priesthood and of the foreign conqueror obstructs free communication with the world at large; where the invisible wall of superstition, guarded by temporal even more than by spiritual terrors, has hitherto confined all, except the very outcasts of the people, within its magic circle—should have come one who was already, in principle and feeling, a citizen of the world, a member of the great fraternity of enlarged and liberal minds, in whom the foremost men of all free and civilised nations would welcome a congenial visitant, and whom one country after another was anxiously waiting to tell, upon its own shores, how he was already known and honoured there. Strange is it: but he was not *of* India, so much as *for* India; and the influences of race and of country that were over him only so far tinged the universality of his spirit, as to give it that colouring in which the best of his countrymen would delight, and which would more completely qualify him to be—as, perhaps, in the remote agency of his character and instructions I think he will yet be—the moral and spiritual reformer of his people, the apostle of Hindostan, the patriarch there of a purer faith, worship, and morality.

The remarkable faculties and operations of his intellect; the readiness with which it received new impressions, and the tenacity with which it retained whatever had once been made; the wide field over which his acquirements spread, comprising sciences and languages which individual knowledge rarely associates together; the caution with which he arranged facts, and the acuteness with which he detected sophisms; the minuteness of detail to which his investigations descended, and the broad principles which he so early adopted and so extensively applied,—these qualities, remarkable as they were, and remarkable as they would have made him even amongst the literary men of the most en-

lightened countries, owed their highest worth to that pure and beautiful moral constitution which was the real glory of his character. Facility and kindness are the common qualities of his countrymen, so far as priestcraft and subjugation allow us to discern the native qualities of that gentle but perverted race. Not only were these, in him, sublimed into virtues by their combination with his intelligence and his principle, but he was born to that expansiveness of sympathy and feeling which, when feeling is also strong, presents the germ of the noblest philanthropy—of that which will love man, and toil for man, and suffer for man, and eventually bless man; while yet not the most exclusive fabricator of a family interest can have more of tenderness and fondness to all who dwell within the circle of its domestic affections. And there was yet more than this in him; there was a tendency, which took the happiest direction, towards what we may call natural religion, or, more properly, veneration,—I mean the ready recognition, the deep appreciation, of whatever is morally superior. Real greatness, which is moral greatness, he felt, he loved, he venerated, wherever it existed. Hence the beautiful humility of his character, its freedom from the restlessness of the mere innovator, from the pragmaticalness of the mere controversialist, from the nationality of the narrow-minded patriot, and from the hard ambition of the sectarian leader and religious despot. It was this which made him turn with disgust from the gross mythology of his country; it was this which made him rejoice in every beam of the true light which he found glimmering among the dark pages of their Shasters; it was this which guided his unerring selection of those wise and holy fragments which have floated down from the remote antiquity of their theological books, intermingled with wild dreams and prescriptions of foolish or pernicious ceremony; it was this which made him so promptly perceive that, whether his mission were natural or supernatural, the "precepts of Jesus" were the "guide to happiness;" and, if we may advert to a lower though not less striking operation of the same faculty, it was this which overcame his young hostility towards the English name and people, his aversion from the conquerors and despoilers of his country, making him comprehend to what a superior race and nation they belonged, and gaze, neither

in hate nor in envy, at their grandeur in arts, and arms, and literature, and polity, and even in religion; it was this which made him neither the undiscriminating admirer nor the undiscriminating associate of European residents; but attracted him towards, as they were attracted towards him, the most distinguished for the best qualities of head and heart, the most able, the most honourable, the most upright, though not always the most influential, of all that sojourned there. It was this which made him select, when he came to the daring resolution of passing abroad to other nations, the countries most worthy of such visitation; and dictated alike the purposes which he should in each pursue, and the associations he should form with kindred spirits, to whom, in the simplicity of his own worth, he did homage, because he reverenced in them that which made them his moral kindred, his spiritual brethren. Such a disposition is of itself a preparation for and pledge of final beatitude in heaven; it ripened him to feel blessedness in sitting down with patriarchs in the kingdom of heaven, and in joining the society of the spirits of just men made perfect.

It is to be wished that his future biographer may find ample materials for the delineation of his early days. We know that he was descended, both by father and mother, from the highest class of Brahmins; and that the addiction of his paternal ancestry to temporal aggrandisement, and of his mother's family to the most coveted priestly honours, led to an unusual combination in his education of the acquirements which are in request for both pursuits. They occasioned an acquaintance with Mahometan literature and with the stricter sciences, which probably had considerable effect, both on the powers which his intellect evinced, and on the conclusions at which it arrived. Still, this fact is but a poor help towards the development of his early character; and that character was essentially the same, mentally and morally, at least so far as we can judge from all that is known, in mere boyhood as it was in full maturity. Improvement, expansion, elevation, and ampler unfolding of its capacities and tendencies, it might, and undoubtedly did, receive; but the root, even of all his subsequent opinions, was already vigorously germinating—the disgust of idolatry and worldliness was already strong upon him—*the idea of God was in his soul.* "When about

the age of sixteen," he says, "I composed a manuscript calling in question the validity of the idolatrous system of the Hindoos. This, together with my known sentiments on that subject, having produced a coolness between me and my immediate kindred, I proceeded on my travels, and passed through different countries, chiefly within, but some beyond, the bounds of Hindostan." The fact is, that he seems, for a time, to have been disinherited and self-dependent. And so strongly were his feelings wrought upon by the alienations which then commenced, that through life, under the pressure of dejection or disease, the frowning features of his father would rise unbidden on his imagination. Our ignorance of more than the great fact of this juvenile devotion to pure Theism, in opposition to all social and family influences and personal interests, almost reduces what we can say upon it to the brevity of the patriarchal record; we only know that, though not by miracle, yet by the providential stirrings of his own mind, by the voice of an enlightened and commanding conscience, "the Lord had said unto" him: "Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, into a land that I will show thee: and he went out, not knowing whither."

His adoption afterwards of Christianity I can scarcely call a *conversion;* for it no more wrought an essential change in him than it would have done on the patriarchs and holy men of the Jewish nation who lived before the coming of the Saviour, but in whom was the spirit of Christ. It was not a *change*, but an enlargement and new modification of his religion. It affected rather the evidence of his principles than the principles themselves; for the unity, spirituality, and perfection of the Deity, a moral government and a future life, with the summary of duty in love to God and our neighbour, had long constituted his religion. And these are the substance of Christianity; the peculiarity of which, as distinguished from the pure Theism of the Hindoo reformer, consists rather in evidence and application, in the bearing upon these truths of a supernatural system, and in the resurrection of Christ, than in the truths themselves. He had previously that faith, that enlightened and filial confidence in God, which the writer to the Hebrews has so distinctly characterised

as the life of all pure religion, most acceptable to God, most safe and honourable for men. "He that cometh unto God, must believe that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him." So came the inquiring philosopher; and what bigot shall say that, so coming, he was not accepted? Like another character in this same record, "he walked with God." He already manifested that spirit of devotion which permanently possessed him; which was neither weak originally, through the imperfection of his knowledge, nor polluted afterwards by the false fires of controversy in which he was compelled to engage; but ever strong, shining steadily even through the last days of silence and darkness, when his life ebbed away. This is religion; this is Christianity in spirit and in substance, whatever its appellation. Nor is it improbable that, by a direct influence as well as a native affinity, his faith was linked to that of the patriarch, in the words of whose history we have ventured to describe his character and destiny. Through the traditions, both of India and of Arabia, might something of the spirit of the father of the faithful descend upon the Indian reformer, like the mantle of the ascending Elijah, borne hither and thither on the whirlwind, but resting at length on the meek and expectant disciple who knelt upon the earth. Strong as must generally be the prejudices of the Hindoo against the gospel,—strong, from the interweaving of idolatry with all the dictates of education and the concerns of life; strong, from the remote antiquity of their own religion and its unquestioned reception by the many millions around them; strong, from the connection of the Christian name with those whom they fear and hate while they obey, and who exhibit little of its benign spirit to mitigate their prejudice; strong, in all the arts employed to uphold idolatry by a shrewd, unprincipled, ambitious, and rapacious priesthood, possessing the hereditary reverence of the community,—we may yet well believe that his mind, which had vanquished these prejudices in itself, and long struggled with them in others, was neither unprepared nor indisposed for the reception of Christianity. He must have felt congeniality with the sacred writers as soon as their pages were fairly open before him. The simplicity of their narrative, the fervour of their devotion, the depth of their philosophy, the purity of their precepts, the bound-

lessness of their benevolence, the splendour of their hopes, —all must have touched corresponding chords in his bosom, must have made him feel that this was what he wanted, must have led him to the Lord of all, not like John's disciples, *questioning*, but affirming, Thou art he that should come; I look not for another.

Yet his reception of Christianity was no act of impulse, of gratified curiosity, or accordant feeling, but of investigation as patient and perfect as if it had been to him, of all systems of religion, the most incredible or uncongenial. He acquired both the Hebrew and Greek languages, that he might study the Scriptures in their originals. He called in the aid of a Jewish rabbi for the one, and of a Christian missionary for the other,—the singular circumstance having occurred, as you know, of the missionary who thus aided his labours being himself converted from the Trinitarian opinions which he was sent thither to promulgate. This investigation, and the doctrinal controversies which ensued, occupied at least three years. He looked back on them with complacency: he had found in Christianity his own pure Theism and morality, not overturned, but gloriously strengthened and illustrated. The doctrine of a plurality of divine persons had been to him a stumbling-block at the portal of the Christian temple. The angel of inquiry rolled away the stone, and told him of the resurrection of the man Christ Jesus. But while he was more and more appreciating Christianity, many Christians were less and less appreciating him, because it was not their dogmatised and sectarianised Christianity. He sat at Jesus' feet, with listening ears and eager eyes, and loving and obedient heart; while they were pointing to church and to chapel, and saying, "Lo! here is Christ!" or, "Lo! Christ is there!" It better became him than it would become us to forget the insults and vexations to which he was subjected by that spirit of sectarian bigotry which dwells in the nominally Christian body,—the worst of demoniacal possessions. One of the most amiable of prelates called him an atheist, one of the ablest of dissenting missionaries taunted him as a heathen, at the very time that he was spending his substance in the support of monotheistic worship, and diffusing his mental wealth in illustrations, first of the morality, and then of the doctrines of the gospel, by publications

which the most enlightened believers in Christendom may profit by studying. The use even of the missionary printing-press, open as it had been to works of a very different kind, was refused to him, and he was driven to the trouble and expense of purchasing types, and becoming his own printer, simply because his work was in proof of the proposition, that "to us there is but one God the Father, and one Lord Jesus Christ." And in this spirit has it been, that, from the time of his arrival in this country to the present day, there have been questionings, harassments, and controversies, which have even been carried on over his yet unburied corse: rival sects battling, as if for the possession—which they seem to think the salvation—of his soul. How they should all have stood abashed before him! ay, even before his unconscious remains! Not for such a man should there be that poor and pitiful, that blind and bitter conflict, to make a party trophy of that which could not, from its very nature, become the prize or the possession of a party. The factions of Jerusalem might as reasonably have battled for the light that used to irradiate their temple. What can matter whether he said Shibboleth or Sibboleth, or neither? He spake with the tongues of men and angels; for his speech was charity, the true language of heaven, to which the noise of creeds and their partisans is but as the sounding brass or the tinkling cymbal.

The Unitarians who expected—if such there were—that he should only worship in their chapels, and be identified with their affairs, and the Trinitarians, who, because he went about the walls of their Zion, to mark its towers and palaces, would incarcerate him within its gates, and claim him for their own, alike mistook that which became such a man on such a mission. It was in his own free and Catholic spirit, ever ready to ask, "Are ye not all brethren? why fall ye out by the way?" that he wended his way, in charity, a while with each; nay, that sometimes, with a literal observance of the precept, when some partisan, with rude hand, constrained him to go a mile with him on his rough road, he would, in his Oriental courtesy, "go with him twain." But the affectation of a doubt on the doctrinal opinions of a man who has illustrated them with unsurpassed acuteness of criticism, variety of information, and conclusiveness of argument, through a succession

of publications, is scarcely more endurable than the bigotry which would append everlasting damnation to his known continued belief in the doctrines so defended, of the proper unity of God, and the forgiveness of sinners by his unpurchased mercy.

The testimony which he thus bore against the departure from the worship of the one only God, both by Hindoos and by Christians, has not been borne in vain. Its useful influence has already been made apparent, although it will probably be long before the full extent and power of that influence will be manifested. Thousands of his countrymen have followed his example in the renunciation of idolatry. The philosophical Theists of India now comprise no inconsiderable portion of whatever is eminent amongst the natives for intelligence and character. In their temple at Calcutta, where his voice has been often heard, and at the mention of which his countenance would glow with devout and benevolent pleasure, no exclusive worship is offered to the Deity, but homage in which the Hindoo and the European, the rationalist and the supernaturalist, the Jew, the Mahometan, and the Christian, may and do unite. Where the votaries of so many creeds must continue to meet and mingle in the midst of an idolatrous multitude, may there long remain, though he shall never return to it, that one spot in which man, unquestioned, may offer the universal prayer to the universal Father! And the flame which he had kindled continued to burn and brighten in his absence. The liberal Hindoos, notwithstanding the power and wrath of the idolatrous priesthood, are growing in strength and influence. To them, apparently, we must look for the carrying on of his work, and the continuation of the process whose consummation will be the disuse of idolatrous ceremony, the extinction of caste, the enlightenment of the people and improvement of their condition, the reception of pure Christianity, and the attainment of political existence and freedom. Then will his name receive its rightful honours, and his country know its benefactor. And not lightly should we think of the immediate result of his example and labours, in a region where idolatry has so long been vainly assailed by the mitred prelate and the laborious missionary. Mountains of wealth, years of toil, and the sacrifice of many lives,

have done nothing in comparison with his simple testimony in turning men from idols unto God. Nor has his witness to the gospel been unavailing. To the distant and feeble churches of Unitarian Christians in the Madras Presidency his name has been a shelter from reproach and a tower of strength. The proved inability of the missionaries to proselyte men of education and character illustrates the service which must needs be rendered to Christianity in the respect commanded by his spontaneous adoption of its principles. A yet further, and perhaps far mightier, benefit will accrue, if the impression should be produced which ought to follow on the opinions of Christians themselves. Some respect is surely due to his verdict on the conflicting claims of simple and of mysterious creeds to the authority of the scriptures. His arguments and expositions are before us, as well as his decision; destined, we hope, to lead many to the reconsideration of those traditionary dogmas which obscure the glory, pervert the influence, and obstruct the progress of the religion of Christ.

The benefits which, besides that great testimony which it was the business of his life to bear, he achieved or contemplated for his native country, have this beautiful quality of all pure and good ends realised by pure and good means, that, however local and temporary the immediate advantages, they expand themselves into the universal and enduring, and a blessing on any spot of earth tends to become a benediction on the great globe itself. The Hindoo patriot and reformer was, by the purity with which he sustained those characters, a benefactor to mankind. The good which he attempted for his countrymen is reflected and reacts upon us. In leading them back, as he endeavoured by numerous publications to do, through the superstitions and corruptions of ages to the primeval simplicity of their religion, does he not show us, and may we not profit by the lesson, that a pure Theism, the original religion of mankind, is the true basis of all religion? In endeavouring to improve the manners and condition, the laws and institutions, of that numerous people, was he not working good for us, who have injured ourselves in so far as we have despised them, or been accessory to their oppression and debasement? The tyrant and the corrupter must themselves feed at last on the fruits of corruption and tyranny; while

upon those who enlighten and emancipate, their own blessing returns in light and freedom.

In the establishment of native schools for providing the advantages of English education, which he supported at considerable expense,—in his connection with the Indian press, and his able and honourable exertions to prolong its existence, by obtaining for it some degree of freedom,—he was coöperating with those who in this or any country strive after the enlightenment of the human mind as the most efficient means of advancing to the possession of political freedom and of social happiness.

In his work on the right of Hindoos to dispose of their ancestral property, and in other legal arguments, he struggled against decisions in the courts of Bengal which he regarded as a departure from the best and highest Hindoo authorities; and which, as they tended to establish in that country the European principle or custom of primogeniture, could not but be offensive to his acute mind which so distinctly saw, and to his benevolent heart which so strongly deprecated, its pernicious operation. Property, like superstition, may perpetuate a distinction of caste. This is one of the evils which make the worship of Mammon not less degrading and pernicious to society than other idolatries.

The noble exertions of Rammohun Roy to stop the prevalent atrocity of sacrificing widows on the funeral pile no doubt contributed to the abolition of that practice. His struggle with the interests of the Brahmins and the prejudices of society would not have been so long, had the British authorities more decidedly and promptly espoused the claims of humanity. In one of his tracts on this subject, there is a noble and eloquent passage, in which, from reprobating the particular instance of oppression of the female sex, he rises to the advocacy of such amelioration of their education and condition as would give the amplest scope and highest direction to their influence on the mind, the morals, and the happiness of the whole human race. And thus, also, his desire to visit Europe and America had its source in that pure patriotism which not merely agrees with, but is, philanthropy. He had long wished to observe society under the influence of liberal institutions. He wished the sea to become the same broad highway for his countrymen that it is for the merchants, the travellers, and the

literati of free and civilised nations. He wished, in the spirit of that gospel which destroyed the partition-wall betwixt Jew and Gentile, to break the barriers which divide the Eastern from the Western world. He had other and more immediate purposes. It was his hope that he might benefit his countrymen by his presence, and, if opportunity favoured, his interference, during the discussions which were about to take place on the renewal of the East-India Company's Charter. An appeal had also been made to the king in council, by the idolatrous Brahmins and their partisans, against the decree of the local authorities for the abolition of Suttees. And the Emperor of Delhi had constituted him his representative, with the title of Rajah, for the purpose of procuring reparation of certain encroachments on his rights by the East-India Company. These purposes are all happily accomplished. His evidence on Indian affairs, which no doubt had its weight with the legislature, is before the public. He was present when the Privy Council gave its final decision against the Brahminical application for the renewal of the Suttee atrocities; and his negotiations on behalf of the Emperor of Delhi were conducted to a satisfactory and honourable termination. During his residence here he was the deeply interested spectator of the most important struggle for popular right which has taken place in this country. And, in social intercourse, he endeared himself to natives of many countries, and to persons of all parties, ranks, and ages; attracting a regard which no celebrity could have conciliated, but which flowed spontaneously towards that goodness which was in him the soul of greatness.

We shall see his face no more! His presence has passed away as a poetic image fades from the brain! But it has left impressions which will long endure; influences of good wide and deep here, yet wider and deeper in the distant land of his nativity. And, "being dead, he yet speaketh" with a voice to which not only India, but Europe and America, will listen for generations. A few days of fever have made him dust. It appears that no skill could have saved a life which, as he was probably but in about the fifty-fifth year of his age, seems to us prematurely terminated. Subsequent to all other signs of consciousness, he indicated the yet surviving sense of the kindness of his

friends, and, by silent devotion, of the presence of his God. His body will be silently committed to its rest in ground only hallowed by its reception—the noblest of all consecrations. Many will there be whom personal attachment will draw towards that spot; and it *should* draw them thither; for it is good to weep over the grave of such a man, and makes the heart better. Good will it be for them, there to adopt as the rule of their own conduct his favourite quotation from the Persian poet, which he often wished should be inscribed on his tomb: "THE TRUE WAY OF SERVING GOD IS TO DO GOOD TO MAN."

And if we shed at his death "no faithless tears," such is the service which the contemplation of his life will stimulate us to render. God is not served by our forms and ceremonies, our creeds and anathemas, our wild emotions or our bustling zeal. He will have mercy, and not sacrifice. The garland with which the Hindoo decks his idol is not less worthy heaven than the useless observances and mysterious dogmas, by the faith and practice of which many who are called Christians have thought to propitiate God. The dissemination of knowledge, the mitigation of suffering, the prevention of oppression, the promotion of improvement, the diffusion of a beneficent piety,—these are God's work for us towards others; and they are all reflected upon ourselves in the building up of our own characters to intellectual and moral excellence. "Speaking the truth in love," we shall best bear our own testimony, and prolong theirs who have joined the "cloud of witnesses" that compass us about, as we "run the race set before us, looking unto Jesus." The voice of duty may not call us to quit either country or kindred; but our souls have their pilgrimage of faith to pursue, through varied trials, to our Father's house, in which there are many mansions, wherein ultimately shall be gathered together the whole family of heaven and earth. Already should our hearts feel the bond of that holy fraternity,—the love which never faileth, which never shall fail, in time or in eternity; for it is the essence and the influence of God, and "he that loveth dwelleth in God, and God in him."

Thus may we anticipate, according to our usefulness and progress, acceptance in degree like that which awaited our departed visitant and friend. For may we not devoutly trust that the Great Master has received him with—"Well

done, good and faithful servant; enter thou into the joy of thy Lord;" and that patriarchs and prophets, apostles and confessors, philosophers and reformers, the holy and illustrious of all times and countries, gathering round to greet a brother, have responded in gratulation, "Amen, even so, Lord Jesus"?

List of the Works of Rajah Rammohun Roy which have been published in England.

1. The Precepts of Jesus the Guide to Peace and Happiness, extracted from the Books of the New Testament ascribed to the Four Evangelists. To which are added, the First and Second Appeal to the Christian Public, in reply to the Observations of Dr. Marshman of Serampore. London, 1823.

2. Final Appeal to the Christian Public in defence of the "Precepts of Jesus." London, Hunter, 1823.

3. Translation of several principal Books, Passages, and Texts of the Veds, and of some Controversial Works in Brahminical Theology. London, Parbury, 1832.

This Collection contains the following Tracts, to the titles of which are affixed the dates of their (English) publication at Calcutta:

Translation of an Abridgment of the Vedant, or Resolution of all the Veds; the most celebrated and revered Work of Brahminical Theology; establishing the Unity of the Supreme Being, and that He alone is the Object of Propitiation and Worship. 1816.

Translation of the Moonduk-Oopunishud of the Uthurvu Ved. 1819.

Translation of the Céna Oopunishud, one of the Chapters of the Sáma Véda. 1823.

Translation of the Kut'h-Oopunishud of the Ujoor-Ved.

Translation of the Ishopunishud, one of the Chapters of the Yajur Véda. 1816.

A Translation into English of a Sungskrit Tract, inculcating the Divine Worship; esteemed by those who believe in the Revelation of the Véds as most appropriate to the Nature of the Supreme Being. 1827.

A Defence of Hindoo Theism, in reply to the Attack of an Advocate for Idolatry at Madras. 1827.

A Second Defence of the Monotheistical System of the Véds; in reply to an Apology for the present State of Hindoo Worship. 1817.

An Apology for the Pursuit of Final Beatitude, independently of Brahminical Observances. 1820.

Translation of a Conference between an Advocate for and an Opponent of the Practice of burning Widows alive; from the original Bungla. 1818.

A Second Conference between an Advocate for and an Opponent of the Practice of burning Widows alive. 1820.

Abstract of the Arguments regarding the Burning of Widows, considered as a Religious Rite. 1830.

Brief Remarks regarding Modern Encroachments on the Ancient Rights of Females, according to the Hindoo Law of Inheritance. 1822.

4. Essay on the Right of Hindoos over Ancestral Property according to the Law of Bengal. With an Appendix containing Letters on the Hindoo Law of Inheritance. Calcutta, 1830. London: Smith, Elder, and Co., 1832.

5. Exposition of the Practical Operation of the Judicial and Revenue Systems of India, and of the general Character and Condition of its Native Inhabitants, as submitted in Evidence to the Authorities in England. With Notes and Illustrations. Also a brief Preliminary Sketch of the Ancient and Modern Boundaries, and of the History of that Country. London: Smith, 1832.

6. Answers to Queries by the Rev. H. Ware, of Cambridge, U.S., printed in "Correspondence relative to the Prospects of Christianity, and the Means of promoting its Reception in India." London: C. Fox, 1825.

7. Translation of the Creed maintained by the Ancient Brahmins, as founded on the Sacred Authorities. Second Edition, reprinted from the Calcutta Edition. London: Nichols and Son, 1833; pp. 15.

He was also the author of an able Memorial to the Privy Council on behalf of the Native Press of India; of a Bengalee Grammar in the English language; and, probably, of various publications not known in this country. His early work, which was written in Persian, with a preface in Arabic, "Against the Idolatry of all Religions," has not, so far as is known to the writer of this note, appeared in the English language. Besides some portion of a Life of Mahomet, already referred to, mention is made by Mr. Arnot, in the *Athenæum*, of supposed works in favour of monotheism; and also that "he prepared, while in England, various able papers or essays on the working of the Supreme Court of Calcutta, against the salt monopoly in India, &c., which have not been published." If his "Journal" has been regularly and fully kept, its appearance must excite a strong interest.

CHRISTIAN MORALITY:

SERMONS ON THE PRINCIPLES OF MORALITY INCULCATED IN THE HOLY SCRIPTURES, AND THEIR APPLICATION TO THE PRESENT CONDITION OF SOCIETY.

[1833.]

Preface.

This volume is published in part fulfilment of the intention expressed as follows in the preface to the discourses entitled *Christ and Christianity:*

"Should the present publication meet with sufficient attention to encourage him to proceed, it is the author's intention that it should be speedily followed by another of about the same extent, on 'The Apostles and their Preaching;' and ultimately to complete his plan by a series of discourses on 'The Holy Scriptures; their History, Theology, Morality, Poetry, and Philosophy.'"

The reception of that publication was such as to afford abundant encouragement; but various circumstances have occasioned delay, and have also induced an alteration in the order of the projected works. The present volume is offered as a portion of the last-mentioned series, which will require ampler limits than were originally allotted to it. Should the author, by successive publications, arrive at its completion, a set of title-pages will be given with the last volume, showing the connection of the whole; while, meantime, each separate publication may, it is hoped, possess some interest independently, and apart from its relation to the endeavour to illustrate the general scope of the Divine dispensations.

This volume, like its predecessors, consists of discourses not written or delivered in sequence, but prepared for the pulpit in the ordinary course of the author's ministrations, and now linked together by their common reference to "Christian Morality."

The reader will not, therefore, expect a delineation of "the Whole Duty of Man" in all its details, but simply a statement of those principles from which, according to the author's view of the subject, all virtues are derived, accompanied by the enforcement of such applications of them as are peculiarly required by the present condition of society.

Upper Clapton, *July* 1833.

Sermon I.—The Christian Mission.*

"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke iv. 18, 19).

There is not an element or an object in material nature—there is not a science or an art—there is not an event in history or a condition of society—there is not an intellect or a faculty of intelligence—but what may be regarded as having a mission, and a divine mission too, for the accomplishment of some portion of the all-comprehensive plan of Providence. God maketh the winds his messengers, and flames of fire his ministers. It is the highest and the happiest state of an intelligent being to know whereunto he is sent, and to fulfil his mission with his might. To estimate with accuracy the position which we occupy in the world, the manner and degree in which it may be improved, and the good which in it we may realise for ourselves and others,—this is to have the fairest prospect of answering the design of our existence, and becoming the authors and the possessors of the largest measure of enjoyment. This is what the text shows us Christ did. He knew why he came into the world; the end and the means were distinctly before him; and so he ran his appointed course, bore his cross, and gained his crown.

There is much confusion in the minds of many persons about both miracles and missions. An undue importance has been attached to the difference between what is called *natural*, and what we term *supernatural*. The great question is, Has the world a *plan?*—had it an *author?* Is there a God whose power is resistless, and whose agency is universal? If there be, the importance of that difference is much diminished, or, rather, the nature of that difference is more distinctly ascertained. The reluctance of some to admit such a thing as a miracle, and the horror of others at those who doubt miracles, are alike exaggerated. They both seem to ascribe an independent and inherent force to the laws of nature. That expression continually misleads.

* Preached on the reopening of Finsbury Chapel, after repairs, November 18, 1832.

With the expression of a providential plan, the phrase *law of nature* can only mean the uniformity of exertion of the Divine agency. The supernatural is, then, distinguished from the natural, not by its greater difficulty of accomplishment, but simply by its rareness. The natural and the supernatural are alike God's acts, only the one is common, the other uncommon; but both are rational and credible; as both may be portions of a common plan, directed to a common object. It is a bad definition of a miracle, that it violates a law of nature. What we call laws of nature are of different orders in an ascending scale, and each is liable to an apparent suspension by the interposition of that which is above it. The principles of mechanical action are often suspended by coming into contact with those of chemical combination, as those of chemical combination are where the principle of vitality is introduced. There is yet a higher set of laws—those of mind—interfering with and modifying all below; and above these, in the universal plan, are moral principles, which may necessitate still more comprehensive and striking deviations, but which equally claim to be included in the great code which shall comprise the laws of nature. In this view *resurrection* may be as much in the order of nature, and be as improperly called the violation of a law, as birth or death, or even the commonest instance of cause and effect in a mechanical operation. Could all the miracles of the Old and New Testament be accounted for naturally, *i.e.* could they be assigned to a lower class of the laws of nature, rather than to the highest, they would still demonstrate plan, divine plan; and it would, therefore, still be true that Moses had his mission to deliver Israel, and Christ to redeem the world. The plan, the specified work, the selected and prepared agent,—these demonstrate the mission.

It might be supernaturally that Christ knew that God sent him; but this prevents not our reasoning upon his mission, and from that to the mission of others. We do not thereby lose the application of his example. As he knew, others may also know, that God has allotted them a work, and sent them into the world for its performance. There are many men, and many classes of men, beyond the boundaries of the Jewish and Christian dispensations, whom we may regard as having been vested with a special mission.

The heroes and legislators of remote antiquity had their mission; it was to organise society, and lay the foundations, rough and rude though they might be, of that edifice in the completion of which successive ages should toil. The philosophers of Greece, Socrates and his school especially, had their mission; it was to check the mystifications of theory and the grossnesses of idolatry, to make virtue tangible and practicable, institute an experiment on the power of reason, and prepare the way for its combination with revelation. The Catholic priesthood of the middle ages had their mission; it was to mitigate the ferocity and pride of a warlike aristocracy, to mediate between the powerful and the defenceless, and to direct the world by intelligence and influence, which, though often perverse, were yet a better agency than that which they restrained. The Protestant reformers had their mission; it was to break the spell of antiquity and uniformity, to expose corruption and abuse, to demolish the one great tyranny of Rome, though by the erection of a hundred petty tyrannies, and to set the example of intellectual resistance, independence, and freedom. These were all as bands of labourers called forth to a particular work, which was reserved for them, and for which they were prepared. The state of the world around them, the evils and miseries which abounded, the prospect, by certain modes of action, of mitigating or annihilating those evils, their keen sense of the suffering and degradation they saw, and their soul's high impulse to wage therewith a holy warfare,—these were the indications and the evidence of their mission; and it was of God.

They, and all who, like them, have, for some good and glorious purpose, thought and acted, toiled and suffered, must have felt and known the fact essentially that they had a mission. The consciousness of it must have been their impulse, their strength, and their reward. For it is impulse, strength, and reward for a man to feel himself privileged and called to the destruction of evil and the creation of good. A mind with such an indwelling consciousness is its own heaven—a heaven of activity, beneficence, and happiness. Little can they be appreciated by those who think God's moral government not vindicated unless good people become wealthy, and the philosophers and reformers of an age be installed in the high places of

political authority, and religion parade the streets in costly robes. The world knows them not, for they are not of the world. This pure, fervid, high-minded, good-giving, and self-satisfying spirit is the spirit of Christ which dwelt in them; and, in the perfection of man's nature, shall dwell in all. And as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. Those who first excited theological controversy on points which superstitious ignorance, perverse acuteness, and fraudulent ambition had corrupted, had no ignoble mission. From Socinus and Davides to Priestley and Belsham, they were workmen that needed not to be ashamed, explorers and restorers of the long-lost truth of ages. In many a mist had they to grope, and through many a wilderness to wander—many a mountain to level, and valley to exalt; and entangled were they in crooked ways, which had to be made straight, and rough places which, with toil and tears, they were to render plain, before they could prepare the way of the gospel, and behold the glory of God, which it was promised should be revealed to all flesh. They rest from their labours, and their works do follow them; and we are entered into their labours, and our reward is with us, for our work is before us. If their mission was to inquire and prove, ours is to know and practise. If theirs was to clear away the corruptions of the gospel, ours is to appreciate its simplicity and beauty; if theirs was to demolish error, ours is to build up truth; if their mission was for destruction, ours is for renovation. They rolled away the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre, that we may behold the glory of the resurrection. Pure religion is no longer to be taught negatively, but positively. It is time to turn away from the contemplation of that which we renounce to that which we believe; and to exhibit our principles to the world, not merely as the antithesis of superstition, but as the vehicle of religious truth and moral power; not as a *caput mortuum*, remaining after all other theological notions have been evaporated, but as a purified and vital essence which tends to penetrate and pervade all things. It is not, therefore, to provoke a conflict with the advocates of the Trinitarian mystery that we proclaim, God is one; but to win his creatures' hearts and minds to admiration of the sublimity of his nature, the harmony of his works, and the

universality of his providence. It is not merely to refute the legendary incarnation and godhead of Christ that we point to the beautiful, touching, and inspiring proofs of his perfect humanity, perfect in every sense, recorded by his biographers; but that we may lead men, as brothers, to trust, love, and follow him, coming unto him with meek and lowly hearts, and when weary and heavy-laden taking his yoke which is easy, and his burden which is light, and finding rest for their souls. It is not merely to explode so monstrous a legal fiction of barbarian justice as the theory of substitution and satisfaction, that we affirm God's unpurchased and abounding mercy to the penitent, and preach holiness as the condition and commencement of salvation; but that we may lead men from resting in faith or forms to renewal in the moral image of God, the cultivation of all Christian graces, and the formation of a character so pure, exalted, and beneficent, that it seems to bear Heaven's seal, and be itself the pledge of immortality and happiness. It is not to confute such dogmas as those of election and reprobation that we declare the great scriptural social doctrine of the universal brotherhood of mankind; but to establish the true morality, public and private, in head, heart, and life; to make charity, justice, and philanthropy a natural affection; and to level the barriers which have isolated hearts and overshadowed intellects; and, in elevating, to unite and blend the whole race into one family. Nor is it merely as a protest against the wild and fearful denunciation of eternal torments, that we assert the corrective nature of Divine punishment, and the final universal restoration; but that our souls may enter into this grand conception of the Divine plan, that with the exile of Patmos we may have a glimpse of this glorious and gladdening vision, may feel the sublimity of the love which it implies in God and inspires in us, and walk as children of the light, which, though it shine from afar, yet lighteth every man that cometh into the world, and rejoice therein with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

It is in furtherance of such purposes, that, by the zeal, liberality, and perseverance of this congregation, this chapel has been founded and supported, and is now again opened for worship and instruction. We believe that in this we are aiming at no sectarian object, are cherishing

no sectarian feelings, are consulting no sectarian interests. It is a religious and social mission which devolves upon us as disciples of Christ, and is included within the comprehensive scope, and characterised by the benignant spirit, of the description of his own mission in the text. And how divine a mission that was in its nature, as well as in its origin! How broad and grand and beautiful! His words are as the breathings of a spirit of love, brooding over the chaos of human ignorance, bondage, and wretchedness. He seems to survey the world with a sympathy that feels a pang for every pang, and with that yet keener anguish which weeps for the degradation of those who are sunk so low as not to feel that they are degraded. He turns not away from the agonising scene; he neither stifles his emotions nor hardens his heart; but the power of agony becomes the impulse of beneficence; his sense of it is a vocation to be a deliverer and a saviour; and in the strength of it he devotes himself a sacrifice for the world. Signs from without confirm the sign within; the thunder of heaven responds to the deep voice in his own bosom; and thus God sent his Son, that the world might pass from darkness unto light, and from moral death to life everlasting.

And not only are we called to a public, social, and Christian work, in the assertion of those great moral principles which constitute the worth and glory of our religion, in the application of them to the present condition of mankind, and to existing opinions, manners, and institutions; not only are we called to sustain them by the spirit of our devotional practices, and by the tendency of the instructions which are delivered and the observances which are performed within these walls from time to time; but there is also on each individual, the most obscure and most dependent, an obligation and a mission; a work which God hath given him to do, towards the just conception and the efficient discharge of which these services should tend to furnish a guidance. For every one does some peculiarity of constitution, training, circumstance, ability, and opportunity indicate an individual sphere of action and a personal mission of beneficence.

Infinitely varied are they, for so are we. There are those on whom it is imperative that they should be much

in struggle and in conflict, the restrainers of bad men and the exposers of bad principles; doomed, or rather consecrated, to a state of antagonism; their vocation for the promotion of good being best discharged by the acute detection of the fraud, and unflinching hostility to the force, which induce general suffering for a supposed particular advantage. There are others whose mission, tending to the same point, is pursued by an opposite path, whose condition is not one of antagonism, but of sympathy, who are with the poor to gladden them, with the broken-hearted to heal them, with the captives to liberate them, on the same principle as the others have to confront the oppression that impoverishes, chains, and crushes. And if even amongst the fiends of hell—as the poet painted hell—there were those who "apart sat on a hill retired, and reasoned high of Providence," much more may there be good men, who "through the loop-holes of retreat peep at the busy world," and watch more truly than the actors the progress of the scene, and perceive the elements of harmony even in the season of confusion, and behold a God making all things work together for good, and from the purity and elevation of their own mental atmosphere send forth into the troubled world, like the dove from the ark of the patriarch, messengers of serenity and hope and promise. And there are those who have a gentler and more bounded ministry, seemingly more limited at least, though in reality with an expansiveness which may bear it beyond many that are deemed the most extensive, and that are the most conspicuous. She who carefully and tenderly constructed the little boat of bulrushes in which the infant Moses floated safely on the Nile, unknowingly but holily contributed her portion towards the splendid triumph of Israel's emancipation from Egyptian bondage. Nor less holy would have been her task, nor less divine her mission, had the child's destiny been only to feed the flocks of Jethro upon the pastures of Midian. From those to whom the physical safety of the infant human being in its fragility, or the soothing of age in its infirmity, is a care; to those who fill man's little separate world with order, harmony, and gladness; to those who are as the fire from heaven, that was said, in times of old, to descend and consume the sacrifice on the altar; and who kindle and inspire all that

is high and holy in human intellect or energy,—through all these woman has her mission too, equal with, though varied from, that of man, and often full alike of peril and of glory, as was theirs who stood by the cross when the disciples fled, and came to the sepulchre before the disciples stirred.

The great difficulty of the preacher and the moralist—a difficulty only to be overcome by the coöperation of those to whom his exhortations are addressed—is, that men so often either mistake their vocation, or deny that they have one at all. This last is the negation of the religious principle, whatever be the professed faith and practised forms of the individual; a worse negation of it than any form of speculative unbelief. There is no religion in him who considers not himself as part of a whole, and bound to act in relation to that whole. It is not religion, without regard of others to think of working out, or believing out, our own salvation; that salvation being a future life of selfish gratification, to follow a life of useless mortification or useless performances here. Religion is the link which binds all beings together; the visible and the invisible, the rich and the poor, the sound-hearted and the broken-hearted, the prisoner and the free. If Christ knew his own mission, this is Christianity. Why should I not eat, drink, sleep, and live, solely for myself? Why?—because you were sent into the world for other and better things. Because this is not really living for yourself: nor is any thing, but the fulfilment of the purposes for which God created man upon the earth. Obligation is interest—the interest, *i.e.* that looks high enough, and far enough, to see the truth of things. There is no divine reward, *i.e.* there is no real and lasting happiness, but in the fulfilment of our appointed work, and that eventually is its own exceeding great reward. And how shall we discover what that is? Search your own hearts; know yourselves, your capabilities and tendencies; study your relations to society, and the view will soon open upon your soul, and your path be as the light. Oh, the vanity of spending life in wishing for that which cannot be realised, and battling with that which cannot be vanquished! How many are ever aiming at that which they cannot be, and neglecting that which they might be! What would not the slave do, if he were but

master; and the poor, if he had but wealth; and the circumscribed, if they had but extended influence? As if slavery, and poverty, and circumscription, and obscurity, had not their mission for scattering most precious blessings among those about them, to be measured back into their own bosoms. Not but that there are discrepancies, numerous and galling, in the artificial framework of society, by which powers of usefulness are restrained, and tendencies to mischief are cherished; by which the poor are pressed lower down in poverty, and the natural fruits of industry and ability are checked in their growth, and withered before they ripen; which make many feel that, so far as externals are concerned, they are not placed according to their capacity, nor rewarded according to their works: but these are amongst the evils, and foremost amongst them, which should excite the spirit of reformation. Meanwhile, whatever each one's sphere of good, let him fill it; whatever each one's race of righteousness, let him run it; whatever opportunity each coming hour may afford for strengthening the mind or elevating the heart, for acquiring or imparting knowledge, for correcting error or revealing truth, for lightening affliction or increasing enjoyment, for smoothing life's asperities or surmounting its difficulties; or for incidental or general benevolence, or for that particular good which each may be best qualified to promote,—whatever of this thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might. "Herein," said Christ, "is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so are ye my disciples."

Thus was it that he fulfilled his mission; by what deeds and sufferings the evangelical records tell, and you well know. How he realised it by his teachings it will be the object of these Lectures to evince.* I have selected their topics for that purpose. These are the means, as to doctrine, by which he showed that the Spirit of the Lord was upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, of counsel and of might. They will all be further illustrations of his mission. The next subject will be the character of God; and never more than in exhibiting the divine loveliness did Christ preach glad tidings to the poor, give sight to the blind, freedom to the captive, and healing to the broken-

* This was the first Sermon of a course on the subjects afterwards mentioned.

hearted. His proclamation of the universal paternity of God was full of blessing for mankind. It made devotion a filial homage, and morality a brotherly affection. Never in creation, miracle, or prophecy was God so glorified as in the revelation that he is our Father. That description of him is a standard by which to try the purity of a religion to the end of the world. It is the criterion, it is the source and inspiration of our faith and worship. Well did Christ fulfil his mission of moral renovation, and of consolation and hope, when he enabled us to say, "Now are we the sons of God." The third subject is the principle of morality. And in this, too, shall we have to show how Christ fulfilled his mission. The principle of Christian morality is that of utility in its best and purest, its broadest and its highest sense. Christ first inculcated this, distinctly and consistently, with all the comprehensiveness of a principle, the precision of a law, the pithiness of a proverb, the inducement of an interest, and the power of the most touching persuasion. Who could mitigate the world's sorrows, and abate its vanities and animosities, and augment its blessings, like Him who gave religious sanction to the precepts, "Love one another; do unto all men as ye would that they should do unto you." The next topic is the education of the human race; of whom Christ was the most efficient instructor, not only in his personal teachings, but by the light he threw upon that whole plan of Providence, to which we owe all real wisdom; by which mankind has been conducted thus far on the great and gradual ascent of intelligence and goodness; and which, beginning with the earthly elements, amongst which primeval ignorance must grovel, rises to the very heaven of heavens. And thus shall we come to that universal and deeply interesting topic with which the course will terminate, futurity —futurity, with its promise of earth's improvement, to which Christ pointed for man's encouragement; futurity, with its individual revival, which Christ exhibited for man's faith; and futurity, with its grand final consummation of universal restoration, towards which Christ showed Providence and grace advancing for man's perfect blessedness.

By attention to such topics shall we approximate towards just and adequate conceptions of Christ's mission, enter into that enlargement of spirit which becomes his

disciples, and uphold that pure faith and worship to which this place is consecrated.

Sermon II.—Christian Morality.

"Therefore all things, whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them" (Matt. vii. 12).

"Love is the fulfilling of the law" (Rom. xiii. 10).

"Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Tim. iv. 8).

These three texts contain in their combination the sum and substance of all moral philosophy. They comprise the essence, scope, tendency, and sanction of that view of our social relations and obligations which it was the mission of Christ to introduce into the world. The first is a practical rule, most easy of application. In default of a well-digested system, or the opportunity of an elaborate calculation, it apprises every man of an efficient substitute to which he may have instantaneous recourse. And there are two remarkable advantages attending its use: 1st, that it makes gross selfishness self-destructive. It taxes a man's efforts on behalf of others in the same proportion as he is desirous of taxing their efforts on behalf of himself. Therefore, on those who crave most of others, *i.e.* the most selfish, it imposes that they should do the most for others, *i.e.* be the most benevolent. The other advantage is, that it becomes an increasingly efficient rule for the promotion of good to mankind, in proportion to the intellectual power of the being who acts upon it. The wiser a man is, the better he knows what to wish for from others for himself; the better is he directed by this rule to benefit others. He becomes, in its application, the agent of more extensive good. The second text quoted declares the principle or spirit of that conduct, the practice of which is guided by the first. The rule to do as we would be done by, when its rationale is sought, resolves itself into the theory that "love is the fulfilling of the law." The rule conducts us to the principle which, in turn, as it is understood, guides us to the more unerring and useful application of the rule. And to this the third text adds, that

which rule and principle alike require for insuring their adoption, the adequate motive. That motive is of the most comprehensive and cogent description. It involves the happiness of the individual as its object; pleads the promise of God as its security; and extends over both the present and the future—the life that now is, and that which is to come.

It has been said, that what in one age is a truth of revelation, becomes a truth of reason in a subsequent age. And it is evident that such must be the tendency of all revealed truth. Revelation *discovers;* but it can only discover that which exists, and is comprehensible. Its discoveries may, therefore, be by reason eventually comprehended and demonstrated. The supernatural facts of the divine dispensations suggested thoughts which may be verified by experience, and become the subjects of natural demonstration. It was thus with the divine unity; which, at first associated with miracle, is now seen in nature; at first promulgated by authority, is now the dictate of rationality. And so it is with Christian morals, and the Christian principle of morality. In the light of the word of God, man has become able to see light, and the faculty and scope of his mental vision have been enlarged and strengthened by the uprising on the world of the Sun of Righteousness. God at first led the blind by a way which they knew not, that at length Christ might say, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." Christ's precepts came with, "I say unto you," that we might learn to say them to ourselves. Revelation is an anticipatory process. It did with the world what we do with children; suggest moral truth, which can never be known too soon, the very suggestion aiding the development of the powers which should in time achieve its demonstration. And the world is benefited by the one process, as the child by the other. As the one implies a parent and a teacher, so does the other a Deity and a Saviour. Christ's mission by the Spirit of God for healing, comfort, and deliverance, was in nothing more efficient than in his announcement of the principle and blessings of moral goodness; nor can that announcement ever have appeared so glorious, so worthy of God, so useful to man, as in the light shed upon it, in the demonstration of its truth and perfection, by the highest

maturity of reason and philosophy which the world has yet attained.

Christian morality is the true, sound, and only morality: the morality of philosophical utility; that which has for its rule the production of the greatest happiness of all, and for its result the highest and most enduring happiness of the individual. The principle of this morality, which is alike the morality of reason and revelation, of future blessedness and present usefulness, is laid deep in our very constitution. Its foundation is in the essentials of humanity, of intelligent existence. It is in the fact that our own highest happiness is linked with, and requires, the consciousness of promoting to the utmost the happiness of others. This is the law of happiness, which, if men degrade or violate, their pursuit of happiness is only vanity and vexation of spirit. That this can and does impart the purest and most enduring satisfaction is alike evidenced by the reflections of the philosopher and by the observations of experience. The very pleasures of sense have their greatest zest when social. Those of the heart are direct reflexes from others; beyond the boundaries of self must the imagination extend for its brightest regions; and intellectual truth delights by its discovery, as we behold its consequences flowing far and wide over human occupations and enjoyments. And the fact corresponds with these inferences from man's original constitution. It is no more in history than in nature for an enlightened philanthropist to be a miserable man. To *be good* is to *do good*, and to do good is to receive good. Men are long in seeing this, because they regard externals so much more than what passes within; and because it is only as the mind becomes enlightened that it becomes susceptible of the best and purest kinds of enjoyment. A law resting only on authority requires to be fenced with positive rewards and punishments. But as the requirement of the law is seen and understood to be really the pursuit of an interest, rewards and punishments resolve themselves into natural consequences. With the progress of reason, the notions of obligation, duty, obedience, become only the enlightened pursuit of happiness, according to those laws, material, mental, and moral, in conformity with which alone can happiness be realised. Not vainer was the alchemist's attempt, in ignorant defiance of the laws of nature,

to transmute the baser metals into gold, than is theirs who, in equal ignorance of the laws of mind, attempt to distil happiness from the baser passions and propensities of our nature. Happiness is not in wealth or splendour, power or fame. Its highest degree has probably been realised under the worst outward circumstances; and he who acts consistently for the greatest happiness of all, will be sure to find his own included.

The beauty of this moral principle is, that it applies, with equal facility, to all the varying states of human existence. It belongs as much to our own country as to that in which Christ taught; as much to our own age as to that in which Christ lived. No condition of barbarism is below it; no pinnacle of civilisation overtops it. It is the eternal summary of social morality. A collection of the precepts of the New Testament would show how the first preachers of Christianity applied it to their circumstances. In those precepts we should find some things universal, others peculiar; some duties indicated, such as temperance, diligence, &c., which arise out of our nature; others, which grew out of the condition of political slavery, the distinction between Jews and Gentiles, the practice of surrounding idolaters, and other peculiarities of their temporary social relations. What we have to do here is to follow them in applying the principle to our circumstances, as they applied it to theirs. Many people do gross injustice to scripture morality, and pervert their own consciences, by looking only at the particular precepts; forgetting that on the same plan now, some of these precepts would become comparatively inapplicable, others would have been modified, and new ones been added in correspondence with new circumstances. It would be well if this were done more in detail than has yet been attempted. There is perhaps less difficulty in obtaining assent to the propositions that the production of the greatest amount of happiness is the object of moral effort, than in showing *how* it can be advanced. This requires reflection; and too many are unhappily addicted to think morality not the subject of reflection—they are too easily satisfied that they know their duty. No man can understand that, any more than any other subject, without attention and thought. To promote others' good, implies an enlightened and cor-

rect perception of others' good. What constitutes this? The reply describes our obligations under the Christian law and principle. I shall attempt a brief answer.

1st. It is good for man to have physical health and agreeable sensations; to have all the faculties of his body properly developed, brought to maturity, kept in harmonious action, and made the source of all pleasurable sensation which does not involve in its consequences an overbalance of pain. Every gratuitous infliction of bodily pain is therefore immoral,—the blow of passion, the wanton lash on the slave, the unreforming and undeterring torture of the criminal. In crowded cities the condition of thousands is so wretched, that half the children born die under two years of age; for this there is no natural necessity, and its continuance marks public immorality. For every obstruction of pleasurable sensation, for every act which occasions painful sensation, there should be a valid reason in the subservience thereof to greater enjoyment, or it is immoral.

2d. Knowledge is good for man. Its communication is a virtue, its prevention is a vice. When the apostles wrote the scriptures, they were moral; when the Romish hierarchy prevented the circulation of those scriptures, they were immoral. Knowledge is virtue. A perfect knowledge of a man's own interest, in the purest and highest acceptation of the term, would determine his will to perfect goodness. The relative importance of different kinds of knowledge should be accurately estimated. This would accelerate that reformation of education which has commenced, and make it a vehicle of more useful instruction. Few things are more virtuous than multiplying the facilities of all dependent upon us, and of society so far as we can act upon it, for the attainment of knowledge. Benevolence may do this in many ways, comparatively easy; as, in the hands of Christ, five loaves fed famishing thousands.

3d. The development and exercise of our intellectual faculties is good for man,—the maturity of judgment, taste, imagination, and all the "high capacious powers" which in so many "lie folded up." Each of these is a ministry of good to the possessor; there is happiness for the man of science in his researches, for the artist in his perceptions and imitations of beauty, and for the poet in his creations.

There is enjoyment, rich and large, for those who can merely appreciate what these perform. These are faculties of which the germs exist in all: it is virtue to cherish them. Professed religionists have much to answer for; they have often aimed at preventing reasoning, which is to crush the power of reasoning. Many dislike others' thinking freely, because they love subserviency to their own judgments. All this is vicious. As we should bring a plant to the full growth of its stem, and expansion of its leaves, and beauty of its blossoms, so should we subserve and delight in the cherishing of every faculty of the soul, until human intelligence shall generally attain and exhibit its full proportions.

4th. The affections were implanted in man's nature for his happiness. They are his moral wealth. Rightly to be their subject and their object is his blessedness. The Roman character was vicious; for its superstructure was raised on the ruins of private affections. The Jewish character was vicious; for beyond a certain circle, instead of affections, it cherished antipathies. Every system which tends to the suppression of feeling is vicious; for affection, as well as intellect, should be expanded and strengthened to its full development. Christ's fervency of feeling was a wonder to the Jews, and made them exclaim, when they saw him at the tomb of Lazarus, "Behold how he loved him!" False shame at emotion, the affectation of cold-heartedness, restrictions on the expression of the heartfelt appreciation of excellence, attempts that can only produce selfishness if they act on the mind, hypocrisy if they only reach the manners, —tend to diminish, and to diminish without corresponding good, the happiness of which man is capable from this source; and are therefore vicious, as the opposite course is therefore that of morality.

5th. It is good for man that he should occupy his proper relative position in society. Whatever, therefore, tends to place all men according to their capacities and aptitudes is virtuous; and whatever tends to keep them where they have less enjoyment in themselves, and are less useful to others, is vicious. No man can be happy in a situation for which he is unfitted. The parent is immoral who only calculates how his child may be wealthiest, instead of studying the harmony of his character with the situation for which he destines him. An ecclesiastical system which

lures into the office of teacher those who are not superior to others in the faculties of acquiring and communicating knowledge is an immoral system. To obstruct the attainment of political rights by those who are qualified to use them is an immoral act. We are virtuous whenever we aid men to gain the positions in society for which they are best adapted; and vicious whenever, from envy, prejudice, indolence, or any other cause, we uphold those dislocations which produce so much of misery.

6th. Religion is good for man. It is the recognition of his relation to the Creator, Preserver, and Benefactor of the world. It is the source of abundant enjoyment, consolation, and hope. The tediousness or repulsiveness of its services; the artificial gloom in which it is sometimes shrouded; the dogmatism with which doctrine is asserted; and the asperity with which controversy is waged,—these, and whatever else tend to alienate men's feelings from religion, are therefore immoralities. By them we create hindrances to their possession of this exalted species of enjoyment; we interpose, it may be unintentionally, between mankind and their Father in heaven.

It is but the barest outline or index of the leading particulars into which man's well-being may be distributed which has now been stated. Both the science and the art of happiness should have a much more systematic attention than has yet been bestowed upon them. We cannot well and wisely serve our generation until we know how that service can best be rendered. We have rested too long in the letter of precepts, without heeding their spirit; in the forms of morality, without regarding its essence; and in the traditions and conventionalisms of society, without ascending to the everlasting principles of human nature and human happiness. This must we do, as well as rectify doctrinal corruptions, if we would be men of God, thoroughly furnished unto all good works. It is evident that, to be moral, we have more to do than simply to abstain from those grosser vices which bring so speedily their punishment in the loss of health, wealth, and reputation, or than to conform with those external regulations with which society is satisfied. In our view of morality many topics rise into an importance which is not assigned to them in commonplace manuals of duty. How momentous, for instance,

are religious opinions and practices! How far have they misled many, reckoned amongst the best of men, from the Christian principle of morality! According to the current theology, the greatest amount of human enjoyment is not the object of either man or God. They make virtue to consist in blind faith or obedience; represent reward as positive, and punishment as eternal. They create sins by the misapplication of precepts, and overlook virtues by the non-application of principles. Much of what is supposed to constitute a good man is made to consist in performances, or abstinences, which are alike useless to himself and to all the world besides. Every enlightened man must desire that this perversion of the powers of the world to come should be rectified. An intelligible aim, beneficent as well as intelligible, should be given to human exertion, especially to that exertion as stimulated by the sanctions of religion. The full emancipation of religion from the corruptions and superstitions which have accumulated by the suppression of reason within its boundaries, would give a new and glorious impulse to those exertions by which man blesses himself in blessing others.

We see also, in this view of morality, what importance attaches to public institutions and laws. How largely and incessantly do they act upon the enjoyments and sufferings of millions! Directly or indirectly, they are ever at work upon our habits, circumstances, prospects,—all that is without us, and consequently upon all that is within us,—our thoughts and feelings. Sometimes an acquaintance with them indicates the means of benefiting others; sometimes they are an obstruction to the good which we might realise. Their wisdom, their utility, their improvement, their adaptation to the wants and spirit of the age, are of the utmost importance. Bishop Horsley's definition of a good subject, that "he has nothing to do with the laws but to obey them," is certainly not the description of a good Christian or moral man. It is mere hypocrisy to talk of living for human happiness, and yet to profess indifference to the machinery by which so extensively that happiness is created, preserved, impaired, or destroyed. One of the first duties of morality assuredly is to watch the tendencies and bearings of these things, and do what we can towards their right direction.

Another most important element is the prevailing tone,

temper, or spirit of society. If public law and institution be mighty for good or evil, yet more mighty—in some classes at least—is public, or rather social, opinion and feeling. There are many over the formation of whose characters and the conduct of whose lives this agency exercises a greater power than any other that can be indicated; more than reflection, more than law, more than religion. To take a glaring instance, because it is on that account an illustrative specimen,—it is this which has upheld, in one class of society, the most absurd and criminal practice of duelling, in direct opposition to the opinions of philosophy, the enactments of law, and the precepts of religion. There are many cases which, though not so conspicuous, yet, reaching lower and spreading wider in society, are continued by the same power. What an unendurable oddity in any class of society would be a man of thorough Christian sincerity,—a man, I mean, who should think freely as well as speak freely! How every little circle of society fixes bounds of opinions and manners! Here the Dissenter is proscribed, there the Unitarian. Most nominal Christians act as if they thought that infidelity was greatly improved by hypocrisy. Enthusiasm —*i. e.* strong and lofty feeling—is generally considered as throwing a doubt on sanity in the living; in the dead, especially if they died two or three generations back, it becomes a beauty and a splendour. There is much yet to be done to Christianise the world. The apostle John said: "The whole world lieth in wickedness;" with good allowance for improvement, it yet lieth in a great mass of prejudice and folly.

We see, moreover, the immense importance of education. The young should be educated into Christian morality; they should have its principles firmly implanted in their minds, and be schooled to carry it out into those details which are required by the present condition of existence. Is it not monstrous, that almost the only systematic instruction of this kind is a superficial induction into that very imperfect work, Paley's *Moral Philosophy*, at our universities? Almost all beyond this is the pulpit, which is much more occupied with faith and doctrines, and a selection of precepts to make children, servants, and subjects obedient. All the youth of the community should be taught their duties, *i. e.* their interests;

taught how to add to the happiness of the world, *i. e.* how to secure their own here and hereafter. I say, *all* the youth; for a universal solid education is a national want, and should be insured for the nation, in spite of individual folly, selfishness, or poverty. Morality rests chiefly on intelligence, and intelligence rests chiefly on education; and the excellence of its quality, and the extent of its enjoyment, are therefore of paramount concern. We have heard of a nation willing to be free; it will be a nobler spectacle to see a nation willing to be wise. God hasten it!

And seeing all this, we see also the importance of our individually entering into these objects; pursuing them for others, but never forgetting to apply them to ourselves. To be the promoters of intelligence, goodness, and improvement, we must ourselves be right earnest for their realisation in our own characters. Men said to Christ, "Physician, heal thyself;" and they will not fail to say it to his followers; and if they did, we should not fail to say it to ourselves. In that analysis of man which indicates our duty to others, there is the exhortation to our duty to ourselves. Do not take this up in a narrow spirit, and say, He has done most for the world's reformation who has reformed himself; for that absurd expression overlooks the fact, that he who is not solicitous about others, cannot, by any possibility, have taken efficient steps for his own reformation. We should rather apply the language of Christ, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal, it shall be measured to you again." Thus shall we enter into the Christian plan; and that is, to enjoy the Christian blessing; to find life, with all its discouragements and evils, yet a good gift of God, preparing us gratefully to receive the better boon of immortality.

Sermon III.—The Principle of Goodness.

(A New-Year's Sermon to Young Persons.)

"And when he was gone forth into the way, there came one running, and kneeled to him, and asked him, Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life? And Jesus said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Defraud not, Honour thy father and mother. And he answered and said unto him, Master, all these have I observed from my youth. Then Jesus beholding him, loved him, and said unto him, One thing thou lackest: go thy way, sell whatsoever thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, take up the cross, and follow me. And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions" (Mark x. 17-22).

This circumstance, which appears from the account in Matthew xix. to be related of a young man, suggests many lessons not inappropriate to the present occasion. I shall only dwell on two or three of the most important of them, and which combine themselves into a uniformity of moral tendency and impression. But it may be useful to introduce these, by first glancing at the phraseology and several particulars in the narrative. Of the character and motives of this young man, I shall speak presently. Looking at the external facts, his eagerness after our Lord's instruction is an honourable circumstance. He did not wait for, but sought, the teacher. He came to him, he ran towards him, as if fearful of losing the opportunity. He was not one of those as to whom Wisdom may lift up her voice in the streets, and be unregarded. Pleasant for an instructor is it to have such dispositions to deal with. There are too many who are passive, who wait for truth and knowledge till they come, or who even oppose to them a positive resistance. So acceptable to Providence is even this humblest kind of merit, even the non-opposition to instruction, that the relative positions of teacher and pupil, as they here appear, to you may be considered as reversed; it is only asked of you not to fly from Wisdom. The great agencies of divine instruction are ever waiting for you, and as it were running towards you. Coming days and weeks and years hasten to kneel at your feet, as the young man did to Jesus, and ask you what they shall do to insure your inheritance of eternal life. You have only not to spurn their proffered

service, or misdirect their mission. And that great Teacher himself, who *he* might fear would have passed away before he obtained the answer which he sought as an oracle, is ever waiting to afford *you* enlightenment and guidance; ever waiting in the simplicity of his discourses, the loveliness of his example, and the perfection of his religion; breathing from age to age in every listening ear the words which are spirit and life and everlasting truth. They are his principles which I would impress on your minds; "today if you will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

But whether from time and experience, from the living friend or the dead philosopher, from history, science, nature, reason, or revelation, seek knowledge; not in a spirit of servility or flattery, but in fair, honest, and manly inquiry. Thus will truth be most propitious to your search. The young man knelt to Christ, and called him, emphatically, *good,* and he therefore received rebuke. This was not so much for the thing itself, as for the adulatory disposition which prompted the gesture and the phraseology. In the East, men testify their respect for superiority not merely by kneeling, but by prostration; and truly was Christ *a good master.* But he accepted not of incense which, if appropriate to him in itself, yet arose not from the heart; and still less would he endure an offering for which the altar of Divinity had been despoiled. The reply of our Lord well deserves the attention of modern religionists. It should guard against the common tendency of advancing in dogma beyond solid evidence and rational conviction, and of stopping short in morality where we have means of further information. "Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God. Thou knowest the commandments." You will, I trust, be untainted by that spurious religion of our times on which this sarcasm falls much more heavily than it did on him to whom it was addressed. They are kindred errors to raise Christ to an unwarranted deification, and to forget the essential importance of moral works. The one is reckoned sublime theology, and the other an unsaving legality. The profession of the first arrogates exclusively the Christian name; and, without it, the practice of the last is held not to exempt from the pains of eternal torment. I have no wish to excite you to a premature voyage on the troublous ocean of controversy;

but I do wish you to mark the spirit of Christ's language, and contrast it with the spirit of much that passes for religion. It is singular that the over-strained compliment of an individual should have led to the record of language so plain and conclusive, and so utterly destructive of the superstitions of a future age. Christ's reply is a demolishing blow at the central dogma of a mystical system, which has so long demanded the prostration of the understanding. When creeds, churches, and liturgies ask you thus to kneel to Christ, let his answer ring in your ears, "There is none good but one, that is, God;" and anticipate that other question, "Who hath required this at your hands?" We honour Christ when through him we honour his and our God, the only good, infinitely and independently.

Christ only cites the commandments of the second table—those which relate to social, not to religious duties. They are to us a surer test of character. Much as morality has been misunderstood, there is yet far less difficulty in answering the question, What is true morality? than, What is true religion? Besides, the duties to God are instrumental, those to man are final. We cannot benefit Him—we may them. "My righteousness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are on the earth." Man prays to God in order that he may be good towards men. Devotion is to generate benevolence, as benevolence is to generate happiness. Christ's description of those who are placed on the right hand and the left in the judgment is framed on this principle. The classification is made altogether by moral and social qualities. He taught no worth in religious services, but as they act on character and conduct. This is ground, not for their neglect, but for their practice; for which their having such a tendency is the best of all reasons. If by devotion purity is imparted to our feelings, fervour to our benevolence, elevation to our aims, strength to our hopes,—then, while in one view it remains subservient to moral qualities, in another it becomes paramount to them, endowing them with nobleness and energy. They want dignity in the mere precept-monger and slavish workman of a righteousness according to the form and letter of a prescribed rule. Such seems the young man in the text to have been. He boasted readily that all these had he observed from his youth. No doubt

he had, so far as external propriety went, in a very decent and exemplary manner. It was not for that, I apprehend, that Jesus loved him. It was rather for his eagerness, his earnestness, and his simplicity. He had not obtruded any boast of his righteousness; he made no affectation of humility; he had come in quest of a better way, though he might not have the strength to tread it. This was enough to make Jesus love a man, in that land of hypocrites and Pharisees. It was some relief from the disgust which the grossness of their manners and their pretensions to sanctity must have continually made him feel. His affection was ever ready to overflow, if vice and folly would but allow it. He loved even the world that scorned him, and the country that rejected him, and the fanatics that crucified him. And his heart sprang as with a bound upon the innocence of childhood and the ingenuousness of youth. Love is easily won by the simplicity that is not *so* simple as to rest in negative qualities of mind and heart, but is in right earnest for their improvement; and Christ delighted in its indulgence—as every good man does. But the inquirer whom he loved was not to become a beloved disciple. There was a fatal defect in his character. He was brought to the decisive test, and he failed. Christ required him to sell his possessions, take up his cross, and follow him. His heart sank within him—he departed sad and sorrowing. How different from his approach! He was unveiled to himself; a self-delusion was dispelled; and he could not bear the reality. His satisfaction was gone; and without a renovation of heart, it was gone for ever. And this is the main point in the narrative. This is the moral of the tale, on which I would fix your attention. It may be expressed in three observations on the record, which, if I make them rightly apprehended, will be no unprofitable or unseasonable study for the youth of this congregation.

1st. This narrative goes to the root of the differences in human character: it guides us to the recognition of a principle of goodness, without which all else is worthless.

It is most desirable that the young should as early as possible arrive at a clear conception of the fact, that there is a moral difference in human character which lies much deeper than any aggregate of external particulars, however numerous or important, can represent. Happiness is the

common object of pursuit—it is "our being's end and aim;" but directly opposite are the ways in which men strive for its attainment. These imagine they might be happy though all the world were miserable; those must imagine themselves comparatively miserable unless in the prospect of others' happiness. One path leads to the adoration of self in the imagination, the other to its annihilation. Thus love is the fulfilling of the law, without which the law never can be fulfilled, though every precept had its punctual external observance. Whatever seeming similarity there may be, here is the great distinction of good and evil, the righteous and the wicked, saints and sinners, or whatever other terms we may select to describe those whose characters rest on the opposite bases of selfishness and benevolence. This vital principle of love was what the young man lacked; and, therefore, all the fair-seeming fabric of his pretensions broke down before one plain sentence. That only the agent of others' happiness can achieve his own, is the first truth, and the love of others as ourselves the first feeling, of Christian morality. These should the young acquire, and then they will follow Christ, nor depart from whatever he may enjoin grieving that they have not virtue for its fulfilment.

Goodness is not a mere collection of isolated particulars, not a bundle of external habits, but an inward principle. And this throws light both on the manner of its acquirement, and on the stability which may be expected of it under trials. It will not suffice for the formation of a good character that a list of commandments be made out, with the resolution appended to each for its observance. Franklin's art of virtue did not go into the soul of the subject, though useful in its way. His plan was, to rule a little book with lines for the different habits of prudence, order, temperance, &c.; and to mark each day the deficiencies in each particular quality. And, doubtless, many external irregularities may be thus corrected. The plan has its utility, which should not be despised because it is only of a subordinate description. But he would be much mistaken who should think thus to generate in himself the moral image of his Maker, and arrive at the loftiness and loveliness of Christian excellence. That must be done by the intent contemplation of human good, until its realisation

becomes an aim, an object, a devotion. This produces not merely the correction of one vice, or the practice of one virtue, but superiority to all vice, and an impulse to universal virtue. Lord Bacon has justly compared the production of goodness in the human soul to the operations of nature as distinguished from the labours of art. The sculptor chisels a block into the complete resemblance of the human form, by the distinct imitation of one feature and limb after another; so that there may be the face in all its finished beauty, while that part of the stone which is hereafter to represent the body is rude, rough, and shapeless. But not thus does nature form the plant or animal. There is in its germ, or embryo, the principle of all that shall hereafter be developed; and the process is not addition, but expansion. No fabled monster can be more imaginary than a character of which one portion is polished to the purest virtue, while another portion exhibits the grossest deformity of vice, at the same period. Great aberrations there may be—fearful mistakes and illusions; as, on the other hand, there may be splendid appearances, and particular deeds of public praiseworthiness; but I speak of the ultimate point to which in each case the current of life is flowing, and necessarily flowing in different directions. Men start with different answers to the question, What is the great end of existence?—and my desire is, that you should answer that question rightly, and make distinct to yourselves the purposes of your being. That is far more momentous than the minuteness of preceptive morality. It is the germ of all morals, the life of God in the soul of man, which, as it makes man like God, will insure all, and a great deal more than all, the obedience to the commandments which he in the text had kept from his youth up. Neglect not minute correction and regulation; know the law, and keep the commandments, and practise the art of virtue; but in this, as in other arts, the mechanical rules, which are not to be despised, will never atone for the absence of mind and soul, by which alone the valuable purposes of art can be realised.

I said that attention to this principle illustrated not only the formation of goodness, but the reasons of failure or success in trial. This young man, who shrank back from following Christ, had kept all the commandments. John,

the beloved disciple, when he was called, could have said no more. Yet the one followed Christ rejoicing, bearing his cross; and the other went back sorrowing to his great possessions, which he could not abandon, but which in that moment had clearly abandoned him as a source of enjoyment. That is, there *was* in the one, and there was *not* in the other, a supreme devotion to good, which, though they might be the same externally up to a certain point, when the decisive test was presented, parted them wide as the poles asunder. It is the principle of goodness, and not the habit of observance, that must avail in new circumstances, emergencies, and trials. Habit is only strong in its own accustomed circle. There is the boundary of its power. Love is as strong in the newest circumstances as in the oldest. It would leave all to follow Christ, though such a thing had neither been done nor heard of previously. It never says, "I could have borne or relinquished any thing but that," when *that* is the very effort which it is called to make, not as an unavailing sacrifice,—for there are no such things in virtue,—but as means to the end which it desires; the end being more desirable, as the means are costlier. Had such been the state of his heart, the young man would have rejoiced in leaving all for Christ. That was the spirit of the true disciples. James said, "Brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers temptations;" Peter, "We have left all to follow thee;" and Paul "gloried in tribulation," thus encountered. And so it is that the furnace which consumes the stubble of mere habitual regularity, makes more splendid the intrinsic worth of the gold of principle.

2d. The principle of goodness is also that of power, wisdom, pleasure, and immortal happiness. I mean not the *power* which by mere brute force makes one human being the master of another; nor that which employs the advantages derived from the unequal distribution of wealth in society, to make men's dependence for the means of subsistence the instrument of their subjugation to selfish purposes; nor the higher forms which station and legislation confer on some, vesting them with command, more or less limited, and backed by a force more or less difficult to be resisted; nor that mental domination which priests and sectarian leaders affect, corrupting the mind that they may

sway the will: for these are comparatively low or absolutely base, and goodness has no tendency towards their production. They are the prizes for which bodily strength, and mental cunning, and accidental station contend—and let them; goodness descends not into their arena. Yet has it power; power such as Christ evinced in this instance, to carry conviction to a man's heart that his course of life was wrong, and dissolve with a breath the fancied tower of pride and strength in which his soul had dwelt; power such as he showed, to draw towards him the affection and regard that yield a better fruit than mere obedience, and insure, not the subservience of will to will, but the coincidence of will with will; the power which penetrates to the very springs of action in ourselves and others; which triumphs in temptations where conquerors are abased, resists where they yield, and prevails where they are baffled. This is the purest and highest kind of power. It is that by which God works his noblest work, making hearts willing. I mean by *wisdom,* not the wisdom of schools or sciences, though goodness quickens intelligence and impels to mental cultivation for its own sake; but moral wisdom, the adjustment of means to the great end of happiness. Vice has always the essential attribute of folly, that willing the end, happiness, it does not also will the means, benevolence. I said *pleasure*,—not the greatest immediate amount of gratification to the senses or to vanity; but that which longest keeps both mind and body best in tune for all that ministers the sweetest sensations and the fullest satisfaction. And when I say *immortal happiness,* it is not the fictitious heaven of superstition, the arbitrary recompense which no heart can strongly feel, but that eternal life which begins here and shall continue hereafter; the life of all that is noblest in our natures, capabilities, and relations with the external universe. In this connection there is not so much the character of consequence as of identity. The eternal life has commenced in him who has given God his heart by its devotion to the promotion of happiness. According to the old and much-perverted metaphor, he is truly "born again," —born of God, and for eternity. The love which stimulates thought, and prompts all righteous deeds, and diffuses happy influences, and stands the severest trials,—making them often not trials, where to others they are fatal temp-

tations,—and ever brightens and strengthens, receiving back the bliss it creates around,—this, and this only, is everlasting life.

It was Christ's love that so often disarmed the misled and frantic multitude, that shielded him so long against the fierce vindictiveness of the authorities, that drew around him a devoted band of followers, renouncing all things; and of peasants and fishermen made moral heroes and religious sages, apostles, martyrs, the world's instructors and examples. It was the indwelling in their hearts of this self-same principle that made their characters as disciples correspond with his character as their Master; that expanded to his teachings their untutored minds; that obliterated their prejudices, aud purified their desires, and transformed them into his glorious image. This made them say so confidently of their future progress, "We shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is." And this is the Christian principle, which, whenever it can be deeply rooted in young hearts, shall make the tree of life grow on earth as in the paradise of God, and herald the true millennium, the real reign of Christ.

3d. The manifestation of the principle of goodness must always be modified by the state of society in which we live.

As the principle is everlasting, so will be its most elementary manifestations. And these constitute so much of morality as is properly called everlasting. Amongst the most obvious of these are the Jewish commandments cited in the text. Such things as fraud and falsehood, rapine and murder, and want of due respect and gratitude to parents, ever have been, and ever must be, sins. But these, as we have already seen, are but a poor husk and shell of righteousness, which he may have who, even while Christ loves him, can yet turn back to dwell with Mammon. As virtue is the means of happiness, and as society with all its institutions and diversities of civilisation and manners, must largely modify the way in which here we can make either ourselves or others happy, there must needs be a corresponding modification of what constitutes virtue. That which was the test of goodness to the young man in the text would now but be the demonstration of folly. "Sell all that thou hast, and give to the poor." That would have

been his noblest way of promoting human happiness, the shrinking from which showed that he was devoid of the principle of goodness; but the man who should do this now would do only mischief to all parties. He would not secure any real advantage to the poor, he would exercise no moral power over the wealthy, he would only attract the pity or the derision of the entire community. He who loves the poor, will now find better ways of serving them and mankind. By promoting their education, their industry, their personal prudence, and their social rights, he will be following Christ in what the state of society makes the path of usefulness. This now is virtue. To make a literal observance of Christ's direction, virtue, we must turn the world back again to before the destruction of Jerusalem and the promulgation of Christianity. The different condition of families,—for households without slaves and a despotic master are a novelty since those days; the different condition of political society,—for that so many of the people should have a portion in the solemn responsibilities and wide influences of legislation, by representative government, is a novelty since those days; the very different state of mankind as to knowledge,—for the means of its rapid diffusion, and of the discussion of all its facts and principles, *i. e.* the consequences of the invention of printing, is another novelty since those days;—these are differences which make novelties also in the list of those virtues and vices which powerfully bear upon human happiness or misery. They affect our opinions and our modes of disseminating them, our actions and their consequences. Free inquiry, the great theological virtue of these times, could have little scope when the divine miracle was seen and the divine messenger was heard. Patriotism could do little more than sometimes draw the sword for national independence. The duty of reading was a brief duty when the possession of a manuscript was almost that of a little fortune. Man can now do nothing for his fellow-creatures in some cases, where then he might have benefited them; much, in many cases, where then he could have done but little; and, perhaps, much more in some, where then he could have done nothing at all. Fully to develop this, would be to preach an entire system of moral philosophy, of which, after all, every reflecting individual would perceive some modifications

suggested by his own individual circumstances. I have accomplished my purpose, if I have only stimulated your minds to cultivate the principle of goodness, and study its details, ever keeping in view their object,—the production of human happiness. For what is the summary of the whole matter? "The first and great commandment is, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and soul, thy mind and strength. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets:" and on these also depend individual salvation and social usefulness. They are the foundation of earth's improvement and heaven's blessedness.

Sermon IV.—The Law of the Lord.

"The law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul" (Psalm xix. 7).

By the "law of the Lord," in the Old Testament, and by similar expressions, as, his "statutes, precepts, testimonies," &c., we are usually to understand the institutions of the Mosaic dispensation. These were to the Jews a divine code; complete in its requirements and sanctions; commanding some actions, prohibiting others, and annexing appropriate rewards and penalties. These terms did not designate their scriptures as a whole; they did not ascribe either inspiration or obligation to any of them; but simply to those legislative enactments of which a certain portion of their scriptures constituted the authentic record. The rest was history, exhortation, poetry, or prophecy; but this was *the law,* the will of God, the law of the Lord. It is this which David compares with the laws of God in nature; the principles according to which the sun shines by day, the moon rules by night, and the stars revolve in their courses. He finds in it similar marks of wisdom, power, and benevolence. He traces them to the same divine Author. He beholds them all illustrating, he hears them all proclaiming, the glory of God; and looking yet further, he marks their tendency to the same end, their exertion of a like exalting influence upon the mind and heart of man. In the spirit of that clear philosophy which

is the offspring of a pure theology, he saw that the material universe, in all its beauty and glory, only exists for the sake of its effect upon intelligent beings. Matter in all its forms of beauty and of brightness, and motion in all its harmonies, exist for the sake of mind; to that they "utter speech," for that they "show forth knowledge." And so he perceived that the laws given by Moses had an ulterior object far higher than that of merely enforcing certain ceremonies, and preventing others from being performed; he saw that they had a tendency to affect human character, that they "converted the soul," *i.e.* changed, transformed, and thereby elevated the life of man. And in this, which many Jews of a long subsequent age, and full of fiery zeal for their ritual, did not perceive, he contemplated the source of the worth and perfection of that code. He thus entered into the spirit of the Divine plan; he had an insight into the scheme of Providence and revelation, which those who only looked to the law *as law,* with no consideration of any thing but the precept and the penalty, could never attain. He gloried in its tendency to create character, in its influence on the mind, in its converting the soul.

This expression, then, belonged properly to the Jewish peculiarity. They had, what it properly designates, a code of specific directions for conduct. As used by the Psalmist, we need have no difficulty in knowing at once and distinctly what it means. Modern Christians not only extend its meaning, but employ it very confusedly. I do not object to its meaning being extended, but to its being extended without propriety of application or distinctness of reference. Let it be used in another meaning; but let it be understood in what meaning it *is* used. Some talk of a law which Christ lived and died to satisfy; which requires perfect righteousness of imperfect man, under the penalty of infinite torment for that which he cannot avoid. I know of no such law. Who can tell when or where it was promulgated? Some call the ten commandments God's law. They are the summary, the essence, of the national law of the Jews. He who obeys one of them is promised long life in Canaan. That is enough to show the time and space within which they were God's law. Others apply the phrase to the precepts of the New Testament. But many

of these were evidently local and temporary. We must always exercise our reason upon them to discover which were so, or the contrary. That is inconsistent with the character of law, properly so called, which is to define and enjoin so as to leave nothing to individual interpretation and volition. The gospel, instead of being a particular directory, guides us to moral principles. Accordingly, one apostle, calling it a law, does so in what else would be a paradox and absurdity, for he calls it a "perfect law of liberty," whereas liberty ends where law begins. And another, the apostle John, puts the two things in antithetical opposition: "the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ."

The exposure of this confusion of language is of some importance. The great evil flowing from it is, that men are left without any clear, distinct, systematic notion of what constitutes morality. They may be very conscientious, but conscience is only valuable in proportion as it is well informed. Very foolish things, and very wicked things, are often done very conscientiously. "I cannot help thinking," some one may say, "that I am quite safe, so long as I am guided by the scriptures;" and I reply, "So you are:" for if you be guided by the Christian scriptures, you will admit the summary of duty to be, "Love your neighbour as yourself;" and if you do that, you will deem it incumbent on you to work out this principle into all the details which flow from it in our present state of social existence. It is not enough that you are affectionate and kind-hearted towards your neighbour; that you will not personally inflict injury, but do readily every friendly office: all this may be, and yet your love may only be like that of the child to the child,—in well-meaning ignorance, proffering a gratification which injures the health both of the giver and the receiver. Such is not Christian benevolence, nor therefore Christian duty or morality, or the law of the God of Christianity. The promotion of our own and others' happiness is a work of intelligence, and not a blind instinct, or ignorant good nature. We must study the principle in the details to which it is applicable. It is curious that, in a country which has been professedly Christian for ages, and where there are such ample foundations for the training of able and learned

menand such large rewards for them, and such classic and literary seclusions for their pursuits, this task should have been most efficiently performed by one who is understood to have been, to a certain extent at least, an unbeliever. But so it is; and with all our schools and professors, the late Mr. Bentham was the ablest expositor of what is really Christian morality, the true law of the Lord as to social duty, that our country or the world has yet produced. The whole of his writings are proofs and illustrations of the position, that we shall find our own greatest happiness in the promotion of the greatest happiness of others. That is the rationale of "loving our neighbour as ourself." It is loving him to some good purpose—and ourselves too. Had Christian divines done this, they would have been better employed than in most of their controversies and commentaries. That their labours have taken a different direction shows the need of another and greater reformation than any which has yet been achieved. They would have been far better expositors of the law of the Lord: they would not have, practically, held it up to animadversion and ridicule as multifarious, imperfect, yet redundant, pliable, inconsistent, arbitrary, and with all the inconveniences of the voluminous statute-book of a nation ceaselessly legislating upon particulars. They would not have ever reacted the scene of the plain of Shinar, and been building their Babel tower into the clouds only to end in a confusion of tongues. For to what does the notion of a textual directory of duty, a law of the Lord scattered over the scriptures in detached sentences, bring us? With a little ingenuity of interpretation, may not a man find a directive text for almost every thing he likes, and a prohibitory text for almost every thing he dislikes? Nor is the evil always in this direction, but sometimes in its very opposite. There is a fearful and perhaps morbid tenderness of conscience which is apprehensive that an action may be sinful simply because it is pleasurable, and which disposes to think that another may be obligatory merely because it is painful, and involves some sacrifice. Persons of this temperament will also be sure to find what they seek. We may feel more respect for their mistake than for that of the others; and yet I scarcely know why we should respect a mistake

which, by its perfectly needless and gratuitous production of evil—for the negation of enjoyment and the causing of sacrifice and pain are evil—is directly opposed to the will of God and the spirit of Christianity. They may commit sin through the fear of sin, but it is sin nevertheless. There are those who believe that if, in any food, blood is eaten, the law of the Lord is broken; and if particular precept, and not general principle, be the rule of conscience, they are right. There are those who, in addition to the common practice of assembling on *the Lord's day*, the first day of the week, also remember the seventh day to keep it holy, separate from all secular avocations; and if particular precept, and not general principle, be the rule of conscience, they are right. There have been those who maimed themselves on a religious ground, to enter into the kingdom of heaven; and if particular precept, and not general principle, be the rule of conscience, they are right. There are those who, even to protect society from the most atrocious criminality being let loose upon it with impunity, will "swear not at all;" and if particular precept, instead of general principle, be the rule of conscience, they are right. And so two of the most blessed events of later ages, the emancipation of America, and the reform of Britain, might have been stopped, and there were conscientious men who would have stopped them, the one by "honour the king," and the other by "meddle not with them that are given to change." Now all these, I apprehend, are, to say the least, cases in which it would be difficult to dislodge a verbally preceptive conscience from the ground it occupied, and from the fortress in which it had intrenched itself. If the aggregate of scripture precept, in its literal interpretation, be the law of the Lord, why, the letter of the law does appear to be in favour of those whom we have described. But if an appeal be made from the letter to the spirit, that comes to the very point for which I am contending; for the spirit of Christian morality is the principle of utility, or the production of what will be ultimately the greatest amount of happiness, carried out into all its present bearings and applications, by a rational deduction and calculation of consequences. Now here we come to something tangible. The meaning of a phrase may be debated for ever; but the influence of an action on the

individual and society may be so estimated, that the process approaches to complete exhaustion of the subject, and consequently the result to strict demonstration of the duty. And then the direction to "love our neighbour as ourselves," is text and precept enough for all. It includes, enforces, and sanctions every thing which we ought to do, and prohibits the reverse. And so duty in the question of eating blood is decided, not by the Hebrew terms of the covenant with Noah, nor by the Greek of the Jerusalem recommendation to the Gentiles, but by the wholesomeness and humanity of the practice. And that of a sabbath is rested, not on a law of Moses for Israel, but on the utility of a weekly recurring day of rest and instruction and social worship. And in taking or refusing a judicial oath, conscience has to ascertain the balance of evil to society, in conforming with what is not a good way of getting at truth, or letting the culprit escape. And bodily mortifications will only be practised when their beneficial results on health, mind, or character can be indicated. And nations struggling for political existence will be rightly assured that they are discharging a public duty because they are promoting a public good. We discover God's law of duty when we ascertain the means which promote his end of happiness. And this is why particular precepts can never constitute everlasting morality. In the wonderful changes of human society, the means, that is, the particular actions, vary by which social and individual happiness is advanced. Some things must ever be the same; in the rudest and most civilised states of life, in the simplest and most complicated relations—as, for instance, temperance and veracity; but beyond the sphere of the most elementary duties, new ones are continually rising, and old ones becoming obsolete. In the Old Testament, there are few actions so frequently denounced as the removing of landmarks. In the New, we read nothing about such a sin. The condition of Judæa as to the division of the land had materially altered. The two great alterations accomplished by Christianity in the domestic life of antiquity, the abolition of polygamy and that of household slavery, were not accomplished by direct precept. They are nowhere distinctly prohibited: but they were put down by the law of the Lord as seen in

the application of the doctrine of man's fraternity to the state of society. The recognised political existence of the great mass of the people gives rise to a whole train of duties, creates virtues and vices, which could have no place in the moral philosophy of a former age. Thus the right of private judgment, and the obligation of free inquiry, so important now in religion, were unmeaning words to those who heard prophecies announced, and saw miracles performed. The author of the Essay "On the Pursuit of Truth" introduces his work with some admirable observations on this topic: "In the progress of society, remarkable changes inevitably take place in moral sentiment. Actions formerly regarded as of trivial moment grow into importance; qualities at one time extolled sink into dubious virtues or even positive vices; new duties are evolved from the novel situations in which men are placed, and the code of morality is amplified with rules which would have been unintelligible at the previous period, because the circumstances to which they are applicable had not then arisen. Such are all rules relating to the conduct of man in the acquisition and diffusion of knowledge. So long as science had no existence, as mankind were solely occupied in providing for their physical wants, or were continually engaged in the rougher work of mutual depredation and hostility, the pursuit of knowledge as a distinct object could not have place, and consequently the virtues and vices connected with it were unknown. In our days, a different posture of affairs presents itself. The acquisition of knowledge has become an object of immense interest and importance. The welfare of society in a thousand ways is deeply implicated in the rectification of error and the discovery of truth. Hence new relations arise, new obligations are constituted, a career is opened in which man may display numerous virtues and vices, in which there are various things to shun and to perform, and in which, therefore, we are called to discriminate and to select."

What, then, is the law of the Lord, the rule of conscience, the path of duty, the test of virtue, the condition of reward? Nature, reason, and revelation all guide us to the same answer. It is that connection of cause and effect which the Divine will has established in matter, mind, and morals, by our acquaintance with which we become qua-

lified to use the best means for the attainment of the happiness which is the end and aim of our being. As we become more and more acquainted with this, we increasingly perceive that it is perfect, converting the soul, raising the life by conversions, changes, to a higher and still higher sphere of blissful existence.

In material or physical existence, "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." The properties of bodies, the principles of motion, chemical affinities, the results of combinations and of organisation,—all the laws which natural science has discovered, and goes on to discover,—are the Divine will. They are a law of the Lord which it concerns man to know; because, whenever he attempts any thing in opposition to it, he is sure to produce suffering. Some acquaintance with this is essential to man's existence, even in the lowest stage of society, in savage life. Comforts multiply in proportion as these laws are known; they are the foundation of the "arts that make it life to live." They have led to the discovery of means for mitigating and healing diseases that once were inevitably mortal; and have lengthened the average duration, in many countries, of human life. They afford the mechanical agencies by which we traverse space in spite of distance, and preserve knowledge in spite of time; and they convert the soul from something little above brute instinct into a spirit of rationality and philosophy, looking before and after, and using the ample materials which God has scattered around it for those purposes of comfort and reflection, of devotion and enjoyment, for which he provided them.

In intellectual existence, "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." The mind is built up by influences which best provide for its gradual attainment of comprehensiveness, dignity, and power. The association of ideas, the source of our faculties, knowledge, and convictions, must tend to its own correction and ultimate perfection. To know any thing of the will of God, we must know something of the mind of man. A growing acquaintance with its laws has rectified many pernicious mistakes, and will rectify more. It is beginning to explode that most injurious dogma of the voluntary nature of belief, which has been the cause of so many imputations

of vice and assumptions of privilege, of the agonies of despair and the atrocities of persecution. If we knew the law of the Lord in the regulation of mind, we should not offer motives to the will in order to influence the conclusions of the understanding. We should also advance more rapidly in the improvement of education and of legislation. A sound mental philosophy, generally understood, would destroy religious bigotry, would deliver the soul from a host of vain regrets and vain expectations, would enable us to show our love to our neighbour in the way that would most deeply penetrate into his heart and soul, and would guide to the formation of purer and nobler characters in the rising generation than the world has yet produced. Christ's power was, that "he knew what was in man." Self-knowledge is self-veneration; because it is the perception of a power to bless, and of the mode of its exercise.

In social being, "the law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul." Every one, on looking within, must feel that it is the will of God that he should aim at his own happiness. But the more observantly we look around, the more must we be impressed with the conviction that our own happiness is the most enhanced by the largest happiness of others. Exclusive selfishness leads unfailingly to suffering. What is the progress of society, but in succession to take one and another class of human beings into its account, who before were trodden down and disregarded, and thereby to augment the happiness of the whole? Here is the source of a growing happiness; and, therefore, it is a growing righteousness or virtue in individuals. Feudal barons were not so happy in the despotic command of their retainers as the chosen leaders of intelligent and free men in their patriotic struggles. The proprietors of men were not so happy in the relation of owner and slave as the wealthy are now in that of master and servant, a voluntary connection for mutual advantage. Indians are not so happy in compelling their women to ceaseless drudgery as were they to treat them like equal companions. Parents were not so happy in the ancient unquestioned power of life and death over their offspring as Christian fathers and mothers with all their responsibilities. That in each case the class which is raised becomes happier, nobody can doubt; but a moment's reflection will

show that what was the privileged class becomes all the happier by the progress from a system of gross selfishness towards one of benevolence and equality. And we also see that this is the natural progress of things. Beautiful law! which thus refines self-love into social, making it the means of a higher enjoyment than selfishness ever conceived—"perfect, converting the soul!"

And so it is in religion, which is not a set of prescribed, unmeaning, arbitrary forms, but a rational homage to our Maker, rendered as we find it most conducive to our spiritual good. The law of God as to human destiny is, that we are regenerated by death to immortality. And this converts the soul; changes it to purer notions of its interest and a loftier sense of its dignity; and gives a stronger impulse to its beneficent energy. This completes, perfects, and crowns all the rest—this sheds the last and strongest light on the actions which must be the means of ultimate happiness; and which, therefore, are the law of the Lord for our conduct here. It shows us, together with and above the rest, how by knowledge, truthfulness, purity, love, and energy, we shall find for our souls peace and rest, bliss and glory. May it ever inspire our grateful adoration of Him who in the character of the supreme legislator so beautifully displays himself as the universal Father! Amen.

Sermon V.—Wisdom and Folly.

"For what hath the wise more than the fool?" (Eccles. vi. 8.)

Why, it appears by the very question, put as it is by the writer in gloom and bitterness of spirit, that he hath at least this more—melancholy preëminence though it be—that he sorrows with a deeper sorrow, regrets with a keener anguish, has a larger capacity of suffering, and, gazing over the wider regions of his mental vision, may behold multiplied forms of evil, and behold them with an intenser pang. No fool, no unthinking creature of this world, ever felt the doubtings and the dark despondings of the writer of this book, the gifted king of Israel, whose name the child is taught to lisp as that of the wisest man; and whose fame the East has preserved in the wildness of its traditions,

and the West cherishes by the veneration of his writings. This book, which records the principles in which at length he rested, and intimates the peace which at length he attained, records also his mental aberrations, conflicts, and sufferings; and they bear their proportion to the multitude of his acquirements, the extent of his comprehension, the energy of his will, and the depth of his emotions. Here, then, is the question answered; answered at first in a way that seems to mock the questioner, and applaud the folly of the fool, and shame the wisdom of the wise; but which ultimately, and by consequence, reverses the primary impression, and reconciles us to the constitution of nature, the dispensations of Providence, and the destiny of man. In certain states or circumstances of existence, the inevitable reply is, that the wise hath more, far more suffering than the fool; but a superior suffering implies a larger capacity; and a larger capacity implies a higher aggregate of enjoyment, a nobler kind and amount of happiness. If the capacity be an inference from the suffering, the happiness becomes in turn an inference from the capacity. If the lamentation be justly applied to Christ, "Come and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow," it was precisely for the same reason that, compared with his glory, all other loses its lustre "by reason of the glory that excelleth." A less elevated mind than his could not have been so agonised; the very acuteness of his sufferings demonstrated the number and power of the qualities in him which are the materials and the architects of ultimate felicity. So, in the gradations of animal nature, the means by which the superior classes can compass and enjoy so much more than the inferior, are the very apparatus by which suffering is sometimes inflicted, of which those inferior natures can have no conception. Every development of the nervous system might be rendered subservient to the illustration of this fact. That delicate organ, the eye—of how much pain to body and to mind is it the agency!—but the very pain which demonstrates its existence demonstrates the possession of a faculty which ministers most largely to enjoyment. And this is exactly the reasoning which I apply to the question in the text as put by Solomon. The gloomiest portions of the book of Ecclesiastes show faculties which must ultimately render their

possessor a more dignified and happy being than those are who are devoid of such faculties. And thus the question, put with a sneer of bitterness, is answered with a benediction.

Before I go further into this question, let me preclude, if possible, misconception as to the subjects and persons of whom I speak. There are people to whom the word "wise" brings associations neither very distinct nor very pleasant; who speak of the wise as a select and supercilious class, from which they, by no fault of their own, and with no loss on their own part, are excluded; and whose supposed scorn they accordingly retort with scorn; or whose attainments and enjoyments, whatever they may be, they regard as altogether foreign from their own proper business. What they call wisdom is something which they think God and Providence meant they should do without; and they think that they can do very well without it. Now, here is a great mistake. Of any one present, I should not hesitate to say that, if he be not wise, nor becoming so, it implies both culpability and calamity. There is no reason, in the nature of things, why the wise should be the few, and not the many. There is no bar to the attainment of moral wisdom, in lowly birth, or the want of a learned education, or poverty of circumstances, or the necessity of daily and even laborious occupation: all these difficulties are continually overcome where there is the disposition to maintain with them an honest, determined, and persevering struggle. And as to affecting to despise wisdom, the Christian who does that, does at the same time, though perhaps unthinkingly and unknowingly, affect to despise the religion which he means to profess, and the heaven which he hopes to enjoy. The very object of Divine revelation is to make men wise—to make all men wise—to make them wise unto salvation. It was kindled up as a light in a dark place, but that was in order to make the darkness light; it aimed at, not a partial exhibition, but a universal transformation. So far as it succeeded, it presumed that this was done. Paul spoke, not to a class, but to all the members of all the churches, when he said, "I speak as unto wise men; judge ye what I say." Heaven is a condition, of which intellectual progression is one of the elements. The fool who despises the wise, despises that which God promises he himself shall become here-

after, if he attain to Christian blessedness. That is one of the gradations of his ascent in the interminable elevation of futurity. The old law is not at all superseded by the new, where it says, "Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom; and with all thy getting, get understanding." Nay, this is the pervading spirit of the new and final dispensation. He so far fails of being a good Christian who does not, to the best of his means, strive most earnestly to enrich his mind with knowledge and truth, and exercise his judgment into quickness, clearness, and soundness. They are "men of God, who, by reason of use, have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil." And such the New Testament exhorts all to become.

The best definition of wisdom is that which declares it to consist in the adaptation of means to ends: and as the ultimate object of rational existence is the highest kind and longest duration of happiness, this includes theology and morals in their bearings on time and eternity, while it also applies to the most comparatively unimportant and common particulars of every-day existence. Even the meanest trifle will afford an answer of advantage to the question, "What hath the wise more than the fool?"

He hath more in every thing wherein he is wise; if wise in them, he hath more in the common occupations and business of life. In the bestowment and in the loss of wealth, there are sometimes occurrences which, as to the individual, may, perhaps, be allowed to claim the terms arbitrary and accidental. They are the exceptions, and not the rule. There is a coherence of cause and effect, a connection of means and ends in success here, as in every thing else; a coherence of connection as regular, though not so obvious, as in the experiments of the philosopher, or the operations of material nature. I mean no censure—it may be sometimes moral praise—when I say that the want of success in life is largely owing to mental inaptitude. There is somewhere or other a wrong calculation. "Who could have foreseen that?" is an apology for failure, which will not frequently come from a wise man's mouth. *He* will ascertain where that which he can contribute to the common stock of human comfort is most in demand, and that will be his market. *He* will anticipate, before he feels them to his ruin, the influences of events and changes on differ-

ent occupations. *He* will not live upon expedients which only increase involvement, till extrication is impossible. *He* will not go on relying on the doctrine of chances against the fair calculation of probabilities. The motto of his life will not be taken from the chapter of accidents. He will soberly and accurately balance the risks of commerce against its prizes. And thus will worldly wisdom insure worldly thriving. The acute observer of such a man will feel confident of his success, even amid his heaviest losses, while he will predict the failure of the fool when surrounded by his golden gains.

Why, then, are not the wisest men the richest? Because of another advantage which wisdom has over folly; the keeping in view that the end of those means is itself but the means to a much more important end—the largest measure of earthly enjoyment. There are many who look no further than this world, and yet are far from making the most of this world. The wise have thus much more than the fool,—that they do not spend their labour for that which profiteth not; that which does not conduct them to, or even which interferes with, their comfort and pleasure. There is a point beyond which no personal advantage of any kind whatever can be conferred by wealth. There is another point far before that, beyond which the pursuit, and even the attention required by the large possession of wealth, is inconsistent with that cultivation of the intellect, the imagination, the taste, and the various principles, individual and social, of present enjoyment, by whose development its largest amount is secured. There wisdom stops; even if it looks not further than this world. Something better is achieved for mortal man than the low gratifications of sensualism, avarice, or ostentation. How rare is this moderation—this combination of pecuniary success with the purer and better sources of pleasure that life affords! How many more gain or inherit the means than know how to render them most available to the end, the only rational end, for which they can deserve attention, time, and toil!

And there may be comparative folly even when this point is gained. He who aims only and solely at his own immediate enjoyment is sure not to realise the largest measure of that. There will still be a want, of which

wisdom will indicate the nature and the remedy. The sympathetic are so complicated with the selfish principles in our constitution, that he only who lives for others lives most and best for himself. The satisfaction of benevolence is as much above that of taste and intellect, as that is above the ordinary gratification of the senses. By enlarging the circle of our sympathies and interests, there is an ampler flow of happiness from its circumference of philanthropy or patriotism to its centre of individual feeling. If the highest degree of personal good be the end, wisdom dictates the most efficient means in public spirit, public exertion, public beneficence. We lighten our own burden when we bear the burdens of others. Duty, virtue, morality, benevolence, or by whatever name we call thinking and acting for social good, is only neglected by a blind selfishness, not an enlightened selfishness ; and its employment, with the personal complacency and satisfaction thence arising, is one thing which the wise hath more than the fool.

We ascend another step. We suppose two men alike convinced that virtue or duty is involved in their own greatest happiness. It is by another and yet higher application of wisdom that this conviction is carried out into successful effect. In no particular is the superiority of the wise over the fool more apparent than in the discharge of duty, the practice of virtue, the exercise of benevolence. The enemies of the theological merit of good works have said that "hell is paved with good intentions." Certainly a huge pile of misery on earth has been built up by good intentions, labouring most diligently, but without wisdom for their presiding architect. Good intention often sacrifices the real, solid, permanent welfare of children—their education and their future character—to the dictates of fashion or the vanities of station. Good intention has often desired to keep the people ignorant, or stint their knowledge, that they may thereby be more orderly and religious. Good intention spends often more on the most feeble and obsolete apparatus of instruction, than would put in action the best machinery. Good intention, by its mistaken charities, makes, to some, labour less profitable than mendicity, and extinguishes the prudence and self-reliance that it is the noblest charity to

cherish. Good intention supports the monopolies and restrictions which maintain hundreds, overlooking the remoter but not less certain consequence, that they reduce the thousands to starvation. This "hath the wise more than the fool," the most virtuous fool, that when he means to do good, he does good—the very difference between Saul, the persecutor for God's glory, and Paul, the apostle for men's salvation.

There is yet another and a last gradation. Man is made not only to live, but to die; not only for this world, but also for the world to come; not only for time, but for eternity. And Providence has established the same connection between the religious and the moral principle as exists between the moral and the prudential. The measure of the happiness of life cannot be filled to the brim, unless there flow in upon it anticipations of the happiness of immortality. He is not wise for the present who allows not futurity to enter into his calculation. He cannot, as we have already seen, attain the best and purest earthly happiness without philanthropy; and it is religion which gives philanthropy its strongest motives, and its widest sphere, and its brightest hopes. The wise man, in his benevolent efforts, will perceive this; he will be urged towards the practical faith of a God, of a Providence, of a hereafter. That faith will complete the elevation of his soul from the lowest selfishness to the highest benevolence. It will inspire his heart with strength, when the fool is fainting who hath said in *his* heart, that "there is no God." There is a radical imperfection in our views of society, of virtue, of happiness, unless they include the ideas of religion; they alone can give symmetry and completeness to the universal plan, and harmonise the feelings of the individual with his relation to the general system. But religion itself requires wisdom for the perception of its grandeur, the direction of its impulses, and the realisation of its blessings. The happiness of another world is the end; and the formation of a character fitted for the enjoyment of that happiness the appropriate means. The contented ignorance, the heartless formality, the base servility, the complacent bigotry, the cold indifference, the unexceptionable uselessness, in which men think to go to heaven, as they call it, because here they abstained from whatever was offensive to common opinion, and believed

as their priest, church, or catechism taught, and lived very regular and respectable lives, are but in the same condition of contrast with real wisdom that we have been tracing all through. They hope for heaven, as the fool hopes for wealth, by a fortuitous and arbitrary conjunction, and not in the fixed course of cause and effect. They do not use the means of future happiness, the only means which can avail, however much they may have of future existence. Those who shall be like Christ hereafter must be the sons of God now. The wise make a good use of time; therefore it will be a blessing to them to be gifted with eternity. The wise cultivate the enjoyment of whatever there is of beauty and harmony and sublimity here; therefore it will be a blessing to them to live in a world, or freely to range all worlds, where the loveliest dreams of imagination will be realised, and nature assume far nobler forms at the bidding of Him who is the first good, first perfect, and first fair. The wise identify themselves with their fellow-creatures, and mourn with the mourner, and rejoice with the joyous; and have a voice for truth, and a heart for humanity, and energy and effort for improvement; and, therefore, it will be a blessing to them to join the assembly of the just, and become ministering spirits of the God of love, and do in heaven the will which, as far as they could, was done by them on earth. The wise have studied the character and attributes of the infinite God, and endeavoured to imbibe his spirit and bear his moral likeness; and therefore it will be a blessing to them when "they shall see his face," and "his name shall be in their foreheads," and they shall surround his eternal throne. But what is heaven to him who has not thus, by its previous influences, been fashioned for its possession? What will his unquestioning faith, but a faith as unfelt as undoubting; what will his unquestioned conduct, but a conduct as devoid of the heart and soul of goodness as it is free from the world's imputation,—what will these avail him there? He may not be the subject of suffering, but what can he know and taste of the higher kinds of spiritual enjoyment? He has not prepared himself for the true heaven of the gospel; he has been expecting some external and arbitrary and positive sort of reward; and it is to him like the gift of a rich and ample library to a man who cannot read; or of Grecian statues and Italian paintings to one

who has no taste for, or perception of, the beauties of form and colour, grace in the execution, or genius in the design. Why, let a man contemplate even a brief residence in a foreign land, and he endeavours to make some previous acquirement which may increase his pleasure therein; he trains himself into some previous fitness. Let him expect the possession of some station of emolument or influence, and he does something to qualify himself the more fully to inherit its advantages or the more ably to employ its powers; and yet the fool in religion thinks to go to glory without those qualities of head, heart, and character; the piety, and purity, and dignity, and beneficence, which alone are fitness for heaven—which are an anticipated heaven while we are on earth, and without which there would be no heaven to all eternity. This "hath the wise more than the fool," in religion as in all things else, that he adapts the means to the end; prepares himself for the inheritance which is prepared for him, dies daily to live eternally, and retires from his good and faithful service to enter into the everlasting joy of his approving Lord.

The question is answered, then,—answered by Providence itself in a connected series of lessons, the instruction of which it is man's best wisdom to imbibe. Without common prudence, foresight, skill, and industry, man cannot reasonably expect to gain wealth and competence; without the cultivation of intellect and taste, wealth cannot give more than a gross, unsatisfactory, and little better than animal enjoyment; without moral qualities, sympathies, social interests and efforts, the pleasures of intellect and fancy will satiate and pall; without reflection, judgment, solid principles rightly applied, those sympathies and interests will often run to waste and turn to bitterness; and that reflection and these principles conduct to pure religion for their completion, their strength, their crown; religion, which holds out the highest object and requires the noblest means: the one, happiness, infinite and everlasting; the other, character, purified and elevated towards the utmost perfection of humanity. There may be dejection in the wise man's course; but though cast down, he is not forsaken. Black clouds may lower over the scene, but upon them is the rainbow, and after them comes a brighter sunshine. With all his aberrations and depres-

sion, his life is still a progression; and so is his immortality. In some disappointed mood he may ask, "What hath the wise more than the fool?" But his calmer meditation on the course of his existence will be like the vision of Jacob; it will be as a ladder set up on earth, but its top reaching unto heaven. The patriarch was sleeping at its foot—sleeping a brief time, while his frame was weary and his vision was blissful; but early in the morning he rose, the strength of his body and the piety of his heart alike invigorated; offered his vows to God, and went forwards on his way, trusting and rejoicing.

Sermon VI.—Human Brotherhood.

"And hath made of one blood all nations of men" (Acts xvii. 26).

Had the fact that Paul preached at Athens been mentioned without particulars, how great would have been our curiosity to know how *he* conducted himself who eminently ranks as a philosopher among the apostles, when he stood alone, an apostle among philosophers! This was the noblest arena on which he had ever struggled; he had fought with beasts at Ephesus, but at Athens he contended with the master spirits of mankind. He was at once in the very palace of intellect and the sanctuary of idolatry. All that his writings and recorded actions have unfolded of his character rushes upon our minds, and deepens our interest, and exalts our expectations, as we behold him, impelled by the fervour of zeal, and armed only in the simplicity of truth, advancing to glorify Jesus of Nazareth as the Lord of faith, in the awful presence of this world's wisdom. Well did he acquit himself, in a speech where reason lays the broad basis of a spiritual Theism, and revelation rears the lofty structure of judgment and immortality. He spoke, as apostle should speak at Athens, in language worthy of himself, and his illustrious character, and heavenly commission; worthy of the dignified auditory before which he pleaded; worthy of diffusion and transmission to remotest countries and ages for reverential study; and worthy to be the shrine of those fundamental and everlasting principles

which constitute religious truth, and are Christianity. Nor is it to him alone that our interest clings; for from the dawn of intellect and freedom has Greece been a watch-word in the earth. There rose the social spirit, to soften and refine her chosen race, and shelter, as in a nest, her gentleness from the rushing storm of barbarism; there liberty first built her mountain throne, first called the waves her own, and shouted across them a proud defiance to despotism's banded myriads; there the arts and graces danced around humanity, and stored man's home with comforts, and strewed his path with roses, and bound his brows with myrtle, and fashioned for him the breathing statue, and summoned him to temples of snowy marble, and charmed his senses with all forms of elegance, and threw over his final sleep their veil of loveliness; there sprang poetry, like their own fabled goddess, mature at once, from the teeming intellect, girt with the arms and armour that defy the assaults of time, and subdue the heart of man; there matchless orators gave the world a model of perfect eloquence, the soul the instrument on which they played, and every passion of our nature but a tone which the master's touch called forth at pleasure; there lived and taught the philosophers of bower and porch, of pride and pleasure, of deep speculation and of useful action, who developed all the acuteness, and refinement, and excursiveness, and energy of mind, and were the glory of their country, when their country was the glory of the earth.

But although such associations as these work powerfully on our feelings as we turn to the page where what is most brilliant in profane and important in sacred history come in contact, we must remember that Athens appeared to the apostle under a very different aspect. There are sufficient indications that to the splendour of its name, and the charms of its literature, he was no stranger, nor insensible. The intellectual superiority not only of its sages, but of its inhabitants, must have been to him a welcome congeniality and a strong excitement; but it was something else which stirred his spirit in him, and stimulated the moral daring of the effort through which the historian has enabled us to track his course, or rather to watch his flight. Athens was the very focus of idolatry. Its altars,

statues, and temples were multiplied beyond parallel, and reckoned more numerous than those of all the rest of Greece together. Petronius, the satirist, who was living then, said, "that his country was filled with gods, so that it was easier to find a god than a man." Athens was called the altar of Greece; and that "the city was wholly given to idolatry," or, more correctly, was so full of images, roused the apostle to come forward as the champion of Jehovah, and demand the restoration of their homage to its rightful object, the only God, the Father of Christ.

On many minds the effect would have been different, for idolatry there put on a most fascinating and a most formidable shape. It had much to impose on the senses. Probably no scene of mortal creation was ever so enchanting as that presented in a walk through Athens during its splendour. From the plundered and disjointed fragments of its beauty our artists draw their noblest inspirations; and in them our country boasts a treasure of which all civilised nations may envy the possession. Oh! to have seen them glittering in their own sunshine, in proud harmony with the temples from which they have been torn; to have passed through those streets which were but long galleries of godlike forms in marble, and ascend that Acropolis which was the citadel, not only of their safety, but of their fame; to have witnessed the living magnificence of their worship, and especially of their festivals; the gorgeous attire of their priests; the solemn pomp of their sacrifices; the interminable variety of their processions; the multitudinous concourse of their citizens; the clouds of fragrant incense that alone could obscure their transparent atmosphere; the thrilling delight of music resounding from roofs whose beams had been the masts of Persian fleets; the majesty of their theatres, which inspired the sense not so much of pleasure as of sublimity; the agonising excitement of their games, and the distribution of those simple prizes of the palm-branch, or the crown of olive, pine, or parsley, for which Europe has no sceptre or diadem that the victor would have taken in exchange must he have bartered his Grecian glory too;—to have seen these, and idolatry pervading them all as their vital spirit, and reigning by them over hearts and minds, might rouse the zeal of a Paul; but a feebler faith would have dissolved in the

enchanted cup, and been incorporated with the profane libation.

Athenian idolatry had much to charm the imagination. It not only had been adorned by the most gifted hands; it not only had a rich stream of song ever flowing through its consecrated grounds; but it was essentially poetical, the very child of fancy; and its Pantheon the vision of genius made visible and palpable to all. Its deities were the beings whom the poet sees in his day-dreams on the shores of the ocean, or by the bubbling fountain, or in the recesses of the grove, or on the mountain's summit. They were not the original product of the pallet or the chisel, nor their original abode the marble temple; for their first creator was poetic enthusiasm, and their first shrine the poet's soul. Nor did it want for means to seduce the judgment, for in their mythology was many a noble truth, which some might deem the lovelier for its graceful veil of allegory; and they had a philosophy, which has indeed obtained in most ages, teaching to think with the wise and act with the multitude; and the example of their most venerable sages sanctified an outward conformity with detected superstition; and their countless divine persons might be resolved into one divine essence, as easily as a smaller number; or as even now the philosophic Brahmins of Hindostan profess to adore but the one God in whom they believe, in the homage they pay to their deified thousands, whom they account the personifications of his attributes.

With all this fascination to attract, idolatry had also terrors to strike with awe. Bloody penalties had vindicated its insulted altars. Nor was philosophy allowed too contemptuously to curl the lip even at its most childish ceremonies. The martyrdom of Socrates was a memorable lesson. With all social enjoyments and occupations, with all the actions of private and forms of public life, was idolatry incorporated. Patriotic recollections and paternal education gave it all the strength and fury of prejudice for its protection. There were yet the laws which imperiously and capitally prohibited the introduction of a new religion by individuals; there was yet, though shorn of some of its powers, the dreadful tribunal of the Areopagus. And there was, still more formidable, the zealous attachment of the

multitude, soon roused in such a cause to rage, and the ready executioners of any sentence dictated by their own mad passions.

Why did Paul not waver, nor shrink, nor his mind feel any impulse but to the bold assertion and demonstration of the sole Deity of Jehovah, the God of Moses and of Christ? What nerved him against so much to entice the unstable, and confound the timid? He knew that, under this specious outside, there lurked a system of falsehood; that an idol was nothing in the world; that they were the creatures of men's hands or fancies, and not the creators of heaven and earth; that, however adorned, the whole was but a monstrous pile of delusion and imposture; he knew that, to a great extent, it was both the result and the source of criminality; that its basis was fabulous, its oracles mere tricks, many of its ceremonies licentious, and its tendency degrading to heart, mind, and character. He knew that God was one; so to be traced in nature, so revealed to the patriarchs, and by Moses to the Jewish people; and so declared by Christ, the divinely commissioned and universal teacher: that worship is his due alone, and rendered to others at the peril of the worshiper. He knew that acceptable homage consisted not in the victims they offered to placate, or the exhibitions they framed to please, their deities, but in the language of the heart, in contrition, resignation, and filial love; an adoration in spirit and in truth. He knew that a corrupt religion entailed a corrupt morality, and had relaxed the bonds of duty, and bent its standard to their passions, and obliterated its sanctions, and led them far from the rule of right, and the prospect of retribution. He knew that, however such deviation might be palliated in times of ignorance, God had now introduced a new and universal dispensation, and commanded all men every where to repent. He knew that Christianity would conduct even the best and wisest of them to a nobler wisdom, and more exalted virtues, and richer privileges, and sweeter enjoyments, and the otherwise unattainable dignity of being the conscious sons of God, bearing his image, and possessing his blessing. He knew that Providence, by the foolishness of preaching, saved them that believed, confounding things that were wise and mighty, that no flesh might glory.

He knew that truth, religious truth, so all-important to man, brings with its knowledge the obligation not only of consistent conduct, but of manly profession and zealous propagation; he knew that, as a chosen minister of Christ, his apostle to the Gentiles, and so honoured after being a deadly persecutor, there was a woe upon him if he preached not the gospel; and he knew that whatever earthly inducements there were of blandishment or terror, whatever he might incur of self-denial, loss, disgrace, or peril, all was trifling in the prospect of that appointed day when God would judge the world in righteousness by Jesus Christ, and all receive according to their deeds. On these convictions he acted; and he did well and wisely, for humanity, for Christianity, for mankind.

And there was something to such a one as Paul that was spirit-stirring in the mighty array that he had to cope with. He was full of courage and of hope. In the cause of Christ he had gone on conquering, and would trust that, even here, he came to conquer. He felt that it was enough, even if he saved but one, to recompense the effort and the peril; that it was enough if, by his faithfulness, he only delivered his own soul. But his was a mind to look and aim at more than this. He felt the splendour of the triumph there would be in levelling the wisdom of Athens, and the idolatry of Athens, at the foot of the cross; in making Jupiter, Neptune, and all their tribe give place to Jehovah; and Zeno, and Epicurus, and Aristotle, and Plato, and Socrates, succumb to the man of Nazareth. He burned to make Olympus bow its awful head, and cast down its coronet of gods, at His feet who dwelt in Zion; and the pæans of Bacchus and Apollo were, in his ear, but preludes to the swelling "song of Moses and the Lamb."

Animated by such feelings, we may now regard Paul in what must have been one of the most interesting moments of even his eventful life, preparing himself on the hill of Mars to address an auditory of Athenians on behalf of Christianity. He would feel the imposing associations of the spot on which he stood, where justice had been administered in its most awful form, by characters the most venerable, in the darkness of night, under the canopy of heaven, with the solemnities of religion, and with an authority which legal institution and public opinion had assimilated rather

with the decrees of conscience and of the gods than with the ordinary power of human tribunals. He would look around on many an immortal trophy of architect and sculptor, where genius had triumphed, but triumphed only in the cause of that idolatry to which they were dedicated, and for which they existed. And beyond the city, clinging round its temples, like its inhabitants to their enshrined idols, would open on his view that lovely country, and the sublime ocean, and the serene heavens bending over them, and bearing that testimony to the universal Creator which man and man's works withheld. And with all would Grecian glory be connected,—the brightness of a day that was closing, and of a sun that had already set, where recollections of grandeur faded into sensations of melancholy. And he would gaze on a thronging auditory,—the representatives to his fancy of all that had been, and of all that was,—and think of the intellects with which he had to grapple, and of the hearts in whose very core he aimed to plant the barbed arrows of conviction. There was that multitude, so acute, so inquisitive, so polished, so athirst for novelty, and so impressible by eloquence, yet with whom a barbarian accent might break the charm of the most persuasive tongue; over whom their own oligarchy of orators would soon reassert their dominion, in spite of the invasion of a stranger; and with whom sense, feeling, and habit would throw up all their barriers against the eloquence of Christianity. There would be the priest, astonished at an attempt so daring; and as the speaker's design opened on his mind, anxiously, and with alternate contempt and rage, measuring the strength of the Samson who thus grasped the pillars of his temple, threatening to whelm him, his altars, and his gods beneath their ruins. There would be the Stoic, in the coldness of his pride, looking sedately down, as on a child playing with children, to see what new game was afloat, and what trick or toy was now produced for wonderment. There the Epicurean, tasting as it were the preacher's doctrine, to see if it promised aught of merriment; just lending enough of idle attention not to lose amusement should it offer, and venting the full explosion of his ridicule on the resurrection of the dead. There the sophist, won perhaps into something of an approving and complacent smile by the dexterity of Paul's introduction; but finding as he proceeded that this

was no mere show of art or war of words, and vibrating between the habitual love of entangling, bewildering, and insulting an opponent, and the repulsiveness which there always is to such men in the language of honest and zealous conviction. There the slave, timidly crouching at a distance to catch what stray sounds the winds might waft to him, after they had reached his master's ears, of that doctrine, so strange and blessed, of man's fraternity. There the young and noble Roman, who had come to Athens for education—not to sit like a humble scholar at a master's feet, but, with all the pride of Rome upon his brow, to accept what artists, poets, and philosophers could offer as their homage to the lords of earth. And there perhaps, aloof, some scowling Jew, hating and hated, loathing the contamination of idolaters, but glaring with savage fury on the apostate son of Abraham, as he would deem him, who held so much communion with their souls as to invite them to a union of love and piety in the name of the detested Nazarene. And if for a moment Paul felt, as one would think man must feel, at being the central object of such a scene and such an assemblage, there would rush upon his mind the majesty of Jehovah; and the words of the glorified Jesus; and the thunders that struck him to the earth on the road to Damascus; and the sense of former efforts, conflicts, and successes; and the approach of that judgment to come, whose righteousness and universality it was now his duty to announce. Unappalled and collected, he began: "Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious (very religious). For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, To THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you. God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; neither is worshiped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things; and hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth," &c.

What a glorious, what a beneficent doctrine! Had this single truth been all that revelation taught, it would yet have been most worthy of God to bestow, and of man to receive with joy and gratitude. It identifies all nations; it

asserts the affinity of all the families of the earth; it proclaims *the brotherhood of humanity*. The apostle Paul might well bear the scornings of the proud sophists of Athens, strong in the philanthropic consciousness of having such a truth as this to teach them—descendants of demigods as they thought themselves, and masters of slaves as they were. How magnificently does it level distinctions, whether of colour, rank, nation, or religion! It rebukes the boastings of pride, the bitterness of hostility, the sternness of bigotry, the coldness of selfishness. It declares to each, that the object of disregard, hatred, or contempt is a man, and man a brother. It knows nothing, it will hear nothing, of the thousand pretensions set up for the gratification of vanity and the indulgence of malignity. What prejudices have been already beaten down by it, and how many prejudices yet exist to which it is opposed, and which it shall yet beat down! That there are in the world different classes of men, heaven-born and earth-born; the blood of some a celestial ichor, to which that circulating in the veins of others is but as base puddle; that there are different races, with such disparity that it is for some to be luxurious lords of creation, and others their saleable, fettered, tasked, beaten, and branded beasts of burden; that a man's clan or country has exclusive title to his affections, exertions, duties, concentrating every thing within that narrow circle except a pitiless hostility to all of humankind beyond its narrow boundary; that there are natural antipathies,—hereditary national antipathies,—which should make mighty and enlightened countries each other's foes from generation to generation, and from age to age, desolating one another and all the world around them, each dreaming that the evil of its neighbour was its own good,—as if the poverty of millions in one country could make a neighbouring country rich, as if the slavery of one country could make another country free, as if the misery of millions in one country could raise another to the summit of felicity; and that there are in the sight of God, man's Maker and Father, eternal differences and distinctions; some walking the earth in the pride and glory of his inalienable blessing, others born, living, dying under the influence of his wrath and curse,—differences sometimes evaporating in spiritual pride or busy zeal; at others, shaping themselves into the more noxious forms of alienation,

persecution, denial of the courtesies of life, and infliction of the bitterest injuries. These were, and these are, under the various modifications produced by ancient and present modes of thinking, evils which the gospel was given to mitigate and to annihilate; with which its spirit maintains everlasting warfare; against which it appeals to our piety, our benevolence, our justice, our consciousness; confronting which, in their strength, it rears its banner with the inscription which, in the day of their destruction, it will place upon their tomb, that "God hath made of one blood all nations of men."

What is the full meaning and comprehension of this doctrine of the brotherhood of man? How has it been inculcated by revelation? What are the influences it should exercise on our hearts and lives? These are the questions which suggest themselves; and if the replies be so simple and obvious as to afford little of intellectual stimulus or gratification, they yet so belong to the first, purest, and best feelings of our nature, that I trust, in making them, your sympathies will go along with me, and every sentiment find the ready echo of enlightened minds and generous hearts.

I consider the Christian doctrine affirmed in the text as involving four distinct but closely connected assertions.

1st. *Man's common origin.* All are descended from the same parent; they had all one father on earth, and they have all one Father in heaven. This is the assertion of the Mosaic history; and it is a rational inference from recorded facts and existing appearances. Opposing traditions have vanished, with other gloomy shadows, from the enlightened parts of the earth, and opposing philosophical theories are vanishing after them. Physiology has ceased to find specific differences in men, and traces, in the greatest diversities of form and colour, only individual varieties, which, occurring at an early period, have been perpetuated and spread by hereditary transmission. The laws of population lead us to one first-created pair, about the period assigned in scripture history, as an adequate solution of the existence of all earth's millions, and one, therefore, which we cannot reject without violating the received, and reasonably received, rules of philosophical speculation. This gives a literalness to the doctrine which has its worth to many minds. Our fraternal relation to mankind is not a practical

figure, a pious fraud, a benevolent phrase; it is a literal, historical fact. Divided and distinguished as we are physically by seas, mountains, climates, colour, modes of life; divided morally as we are by education, opinions, prejudices, government, philosophy, religion,—these divisions all narrow as we go back to a little undivided family, which then was the whole human race; into which ourselves, and those most remote, most dissimilar, most hostile, are alike resolvable; and that we were then so identified in fact should now identify us in heart, and swallow up every little feeling in the sublimity of that philanthropic union.

2d. *Man's common nature.* *One blood* is one essential mode of existence—one physical and moral constitution. Man is one, for men are of like "parts and passions." The principles of thought and feeling obtain alike with the operations of the brain and the pulsations of the heart. Hence it is that we can reason universally on man; and know that oppression will degrade, injuries exasperate, kindness conciliate, and unchecked power corrupt. "His blood is like ours!" shouted a Marseillais peasant, as that of Louis XVI. spouted from his headless trunk upon the guillotine. It was—and therefore it should not have been shed. It was—and therefore the expression should have been one, not of vengeance, but of mercy. It was—and therefore that should have been, not an exulting shout, but a whispered caution—an admonition of the peril of weak humanity in power. Well were it if the master felt this before his slave had wrested emancipation from him, to check his tyranny; and if the freed slave felt it after, to check his retribution. This is the basis of all sympathy. This makes us understand, without actual experience, something of the miseries of want and exile. Let the gay and prosperous call them up to their imagination, and then consult their hearts. They may but see as in a glass darkly the extent of the suffering; but that dim reflection will yet be a faithful one—will yet be enough, or should be, to move them to painful sympathy and active aid.

3d. *Man's common subjection to divine government.* "God hath made of one blood all the nations of men." He hath made and placed them in the same relation to himself. Wherever there is man, there is a creature of his formation, and the object of his love and care. Wherever

there is man, there is a being of all whose actions and of all whose thoughts he is the unseen but ceaseless witness. Wherever there is man, there is a being in whose soul he has implanted aspirations after himself, a propensity to religion, a feeling after Him, if haply he may be found, which may be misguided by superstition, or almost stifled by ignorance, or elevated by knowledge into the purest piety; but which yet is there. Wherever there is man, there is a being all the circumstances of whose existence, all the events of whose life, the number and colour of whose days, are of his controlling, directing, and ordaining. Wherever there is man, there is one whom his providence is subjecting to its discipline, whom his summons will call to render an account at his tribunal of impartial justice, and whom he is preparing for an existence which shall endure for eternal ages. In these momentous matters—and what can compare with these?—we are all one in his presence.

4th. *Man's common destiny.* He who made all of one blood, made them all to one end. They all tend towards death, judgment, eternity.

I must now advert to the way in which the scriptures teach this doctrine; and teach it they do, incessantly, prominently, emphatically, from Genesis to Revelation. It is the first of their facts in one form, and in another the last of their prophecies.

Whether the introduction of the book of Genesis be literal or allegorical—a history, a parable, or a mythos—this is one of the principal lessons which it was given and preserved to inculcate. The first pair are presented to our imaginations, that in their creation, their innocence, their paradise, their fall, and their expulsion, the sympathy with which they touch our hearts may expand them towards our brethren. That narrative is no bigot's invention. It traces back the stream of life, that at its source, however remote, we may learn it is the same, however long it may have flowed, and broadly spread. See the ark that floated on the waters, when the flood destroyed and renovated the world; it bore the destinies of humankind. They were again one family; sharers in a common peril, heirs of a common salvation. In the call of Abraham, the apparent commencement of an exclusive system in the separation of

the Jewish people, what was the great promise to the patriarch? There was nothing exclusive in that. It is the key to the Jewish peculiarity. That system, so far as it was one of peculiar privilege, was only so for greater common good ultimately. "In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." There is a beautiful diversity in its repetitions—*families, kindred, nations.* Revelation has been sometimes charged with teaching divine favouritism. Here is its most exclusive blessing, and it is simply the promise of a good from which there shall be no exclusion. Go on to the deliverance of the Israelites. Why, that is a record at which oppression shall quail, and slavery glow in reading, while the world shall stand. How new *then* in the world were the precepts of their legislator, that the stranger among them should be as one of them, in all legal rights, for they were strangers in the land of Egypt! How nobly did their prophets keep alive this beneficent truth—"Have we not all one Father, hath not one God created us?" Excellent question! for which humanity should bless the Jewish bard that uttered it. "The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all." They meet, not only in the grave, but in the house of God, and in the good man's heart. *Son of man* is an appellation which we owe to them; and is there not affection in such phraseology? Christ came. He answered the question, "Who is my neighbour?" He immortalised the Good Samaritan, and opposition to national antipathies and religious antipathies could be carried no further. Here he makes you respect virtue in a deadly enemy, as, in the Prodigal Son, you are taught to compassionate suffering in the vicious outcast. He founded the worship of God as man's Father. Every repetition of his prayer is a solemn pledge of universal benevolence. He predicted a judgment in which to visit the prisoner, feed the famishing, clothe the naked, welcome the stranger, are the ground of admission to eternal glory. How did he commission his apostles? —"Preach the gospel to all nations." They did so. There was no flattery of Jewish or of Gentile prejudices. They made "both one in Christ Jesus." Who feels not a noble expansion of heart in that declaration of Peter, when he trampled on the old barriers of bigotry, and entered the house of the Roman Cornelius, exclaiming, "Of a truth,

I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him"? Who rises not in dignity with Paul, as on Mars' Hill he declared to the Athenians, "God hath made of one blood all nations of men"? Look at Paul's arguments to the Romans and Corinthians on the resurrection. In both he identifies Christ with mankind, and reasons to a universal resurrection as a universal blessing. John argues on morality like Paul on doctrine—"He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how shall he love God whom he hath not seen?" The apostles have been called inconclusive reasoners; their reasoning at least proves the boundless benignity of their system, and that is something towards its heavenly origin. I cannot expound the Revelation, but there is one vision in the book about which there can be no dubiety. The writer beholds all creatures joining in a common act of grateful and blissful adoration; "And every creature which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, heard I saying, Blessing, and honour, and glory, and power, be unto him that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb, for ever and ever."

Thus, from their commencement to their close, do the Christian scriptures tell man to have a brother's heart for his fellow-man, in all his goodness, in all his errors, in all his sufferings.

This doctrine is a stimulus to piety. The God who thus made us all, is a God for us all to love. He is not like the imagined deities of heathenism, who were, by the partial exercise of their powers and bestowment of their favours, objects of worship to one tribe and of abomination to all others. His righteous claim is on the human heart. He is the personification of its noblest notions of supreme benevolence. His excellence rises above the loftiest height to which imagination can climb, and spreads beyond the widest expanse to which it can extend. The frame of man is his temple; the heart of man, his altar; the soul of man, his priest and worshiper. The identity of our nature, in the multiplied millions of its individual possessors, is a monument and emblem of the identity of his love, in the multiplied millions of its eternally varied acts of beneficence. "All that have breath, praise the Lord," said the

Hebrew bard; and so says the voice of universal nature. If there be any manifestations of his Almighty love in which we should exult; if we should praise him in the review of our own little vicissitudes of joy and sorrow; in the contemplation of the heavens which his hand has spread abroad, and the earth which he has established for ever; in the prospect of the better heavens and earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, which he hath prepared,—surely also we should exult in the fact that he hath made of one blood all the nations of men, and feel the force of the apostolic argument, "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."

Oh, what a rebuke, what an admonition, is here to tyranny, cruelty, bigotry, and all those baneful passions and bad principles which sometimes rage in man, with a ferocity unknown to the brute creation, making their own kind their victims!

Oppressor, what are you crushing? Bigot, what are you cursing? Man-destroyer, legally or illegally, by your own hands or others, in the field or on the scaffold, by royal edict or assassin's dagger, what are you mangling? The image of your God in your brother's person; and every drop of that stream you are spilling on the dust like water is of your own blood. God made you and him of it—of the same, of *one* blood; that you might dwell on the earth in unity and peace, in good will and charity and mutual affection. Think, proud ones of the earth, as you trample in scorn upon the necks of multitudes, that it is your own nature and blood that you debase in their debasement. And if you felt as it is shame and crime for man not to feel, you would writhe like the noblest spirit of chivalry under the blow of cowardice or the brand of the galley-slave, at every insult which you now wantonly offer to humanity. Tyrants and oppressors! what are you doing, with your exactions and extortions, your proscriptions, banishments, and executions? You are laying waste human homes and hearts. You are violating that law of brotherhood which alone gives you a place in the rank of rational creatures, and selling your best birthright for passion's or flattery's mess of poisoned pottage. In your momentary success, you are but subjecting *yourselves* to guilt, *others* to misery, and in both fearfully triumphing

over your own nature, and making it a suffering, a loathsome, and a hellish thing. You are flying in the Almighty face of God, who to all nations of men bears the relation of their common Father.

Bigots, drop the thunderbolt; hurl not even in fancy the eternal curse of the eternal God at a heart that throbs as sensitively as your own. Spirit of that gospel whose name avarice and ambition have profaned so foully, possess the hearts of those who vainly take it on their lips; and let men learn, at length, the song of angels, "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, good will towards men"!

What a stimulus to moral excellence is this glorious doctrine of man's fraternity! It creates a delightful and ennobling feeling of identity with the human race—with whoever have been the worthiest of that race—in the breast of every individual. It makes us *one with the excellent*, in all the glory of their excellence, telling us that we are of their blood; that it is *our* nature they dignify by deeds which become the children of the God of righteousness and love. Who can read or hear of what man has done of goodness; how, for some worthy object, he has borne unrepiningly the accumulated privations of lingering years; and has compassed sea and land, the pilgrim of benevolence; and has put forth exertions of body and of mind, till both seemed consuming in the intensity of their own energy; and has sacrificed ease, and fortune, and health, and fame itself, when most deserving of its brightest meed; and has braved opposition, and scorn, and power, and danger, and ingratitude, and death: who can contemplate this, and not feel that his nature is a summons to virtue; and that if he only does that which "may become a man," he will only do that which is generous and exalted?

Yes, we are one with those who, in our own or any other age—who, in our own or any other land—have heard their country's call to labour or to suffer in her cause, to assert her rights, to guard her safety, to redress her grievances, to improve her institutions, and to redeem her population from the darkness of ignorance, the yoke of slavery, the abyss of degradation, and become the heroes or the martyrs of humanity. Yes, we are one with those who,

through the long line of patriarchs, prophets, apostles, confessors, reformers, have been Heaven's messengers of good to earth; who, in the most pestilential times of moral corruption, have stood like Aaron of old between the dead and the living, to stay the plague of sin and suffering, and avert the stroke that would smite the earth with a curse. Yes, we are one, in holy faith, and reverential love, and sincere obedience, with him, the Son of God, the Son of man, who prayed that his disciples might be in him, and he in them; one with him as he is with the Father; that first-born among many brethren who taught and exemplified perfection, the perfection of boundless, ceaseless love to all that live.

This doctrine makes us *one with the oppressed and suffering;* with those who pine in the wretchedness of poverty, who wither under the blight of disease, who sicken with the pangs of hope deferred, whose backs are bared for the lash of slavery, whose hearts are riven by the thunder-stroke of calamity: it makes us sad in their sorrows, and ministers to their consolations. It is an appeal that reaches the hearts of those who have little else to proffer for relief but the kind feelings of those hearts.

> "Man is dear to Man: the poorest poor
> Long for some moments, in a weary life,
> When they can know, and feel, that they have been
> Themselves the fathers and the dealers out
> Of some small blessings; have been kind to such
> As needed kindness;—for this single cause,
> That we have, all of us, ONE HUMAN HEART."

Remember, too, for purposes of humility and charity, for the suppression of pride, censoriousness, and wrath, that this doctrine makes us *one even with the wicked;* with those whom ignorance leads blindfold into guilt and misery; whom successive temptations plunge in ever-deepening degradation; whom passion seizes with its giant arm, and hurls from the proudest height down headlong to ruin.

It unfolds to us, in common principles, the sources of what strikes with horror, and touches with a brother's earnestness for their deliverance; and melts a stern disgust into a tender pity; and teaches, while we rigidly avoid, not so rigidly to condemn; and reminds that this is not

the whole of their character, nor these the sole capacities of their nature; and if beyond *our* reach, yet bids us hope that the God who made us of one blood may yet, though by a long, painful, and awful process, unite us in one destiny. While we feel, and strongly, for the wretched slave, let us remember that the slave-master too is man. While we have a mournful sympathy with the baffled and crushed patriots of one land, or an exulting sympathy with the triumphant patriots of another, let us remember that the tyrant, and tyrant's minions too, are men; that they were made and meant for better things than these; and still within them lives that capability, an immortal spark, which futurity may cherish, and raise them to the level of their earthly victims, and purify them even from the bloody stains of their successful guilt, and reunite them to the humanity they have insulted, and admit them to the happy brotherhood against whose progress they have waged an impious warfare. Believing in the Christian doctrine, we cannot despair of man, either of the individual or of the whole human race. Good is stronger than evil. God is the common Father. All nations are of one blood. There is yet, in the plan of Providence, a blessing for all nations. It shall cover the earth—cover it as the waters the bed of the ocean—cover it with a boundless deluge of freedom and felicity. Our common nature and lot is the pledge of affection, and the spring of happiness and hope. And it is a latent sense of this universal fitness for and universal destiny to virtue, that makes us even now express the strongest praise by language, which else were no commendation at all; and say of uncommon excellence, "*This was a* MAN!"

SERMON VII.—BLESSING THE POOR.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. v. 3).

I APPREHEND that the true construction of this verse requires the separation of the words "in spirit" from the word "poor;" that they are the poor, literally, who are spoken of, and not a supposed class of characters described as "poor in spirit;" and that "in spirit," or "by the

spirit," relates not to the character, but to the blessing; or rather to the agency by which that blessing was to be bestowed or manifested. The poor might be despised by the world, throughout all its kingdoms, but the spirit would bless them by investing them with the dignities and privileges of the kingdom of heaven.

Wetstein, one of the greatest names among critics, connects the words "in spirit" with the epithet "blessed;" Campbell, one of the first names among translators, contends that the "poor" literally are spoken of, and not the poor spiritually, or metaphorically. Although my exposition of the meaning may, perhaps, differ from that which either of these illustrious men would have advanced, yet the construction of the passage on which that exposition rests may, as far as I have stated, claim the sanction of their authority.

That this is the true construction and meaning may be shown by referring to the parallel passage in the gospel of Luke, vi. 20. There the words "in spirit" are omitted altogether. "Blessed (be ye) poor, for yours is the kingdom of God." And not only so, but the blessings, vers. 20-23, are followed by denunciations, vers. 24-26, which are in antithetical opposition to them, clause for clause, and character for character; and the antithesis to the poor is not the rich in spirit, but the rich literally (ver. 24): "Woe unto you that are rich; for ye have received your consolation." The poor literally must therefore have been intended in the first clause; and if in Luke, then also in Matthew, for the discourse is evidently the same.

Indeed, poverty of spirit is not, in any fair and natural explanation of the phrase, the description of a state of mind to which we can attach the Saviour's benediction. "Spirit" is either intelligence or energy; and in both senses poverty is to be deprecated. As to the first, it describes ignorance; and "blessed are the ignorant," the poor in attainment and comprehension, the poorly instructed, is assuredly no Christian beatitude, nor a tenet of any faith, but the degrading one which holds ignorance to be the mother of devotion. No; blessed are the rich in spirit; the men whose capacious mind is like an eastern palace; in itself magnificent, and its wide spaciousness adorned and filled with diversified treasures, its lofty turrets commanding an

ample horizon, circling field, flood, and mountain, art's stately gardens, and nature's wild loveliness; and its hundred gates ever open for the welcoming of each worthy guest from all earth's regions, far or near. That God will raise the minds of all, in heaven, to this amplitude of capacity and intellectual wealth is the noblest promise of divine revelation. In those of its disciples who attain it on earth, the gospel shines with its most resplendent brightness. Our "unction from the Holy One" is that we may "know all things." This is the true anointing of the Spirit, which is shed forth on the followers of Christ. It makes men wise, not foolish or ignorant, unto salvation.

Nor, if "spirit" designate energy, can we regard poverty of it as a benediction. Strength efficiently to act what we have intelligence wisely to will is to bless both others and ourselves. Christianity nowhere canonises feebleness of purpose or of performance. It has generated and developed the mightiest energies which have ever acted upon the world, and before which the powers of the world have quailed. The production of moral strength is its great object. It inculcates the fear of God to annihilate the fear of man. It realises a world to come, that, by its votaries, this world may be overcome. It sends forth its preachers, "strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." They were men who defied "principalities and powers, and spiritual wickedness in high places." They were *rich* in the spirit, in its miraculous power, in persuasive eloquence, in unflinching determination, and in persevering and successful exertion. And in that richness they received the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace.

The interpretation of "poor in spirit" by humble or meek, is without scriptural authority for such a meaning to the phrase; and would introduce a very unlikely repetition, as we have, just afterwards, "blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

The common meaning of "spirit," in the New Testament, is the power of working miracles; in which sense the gospel was preached, "with the holy spirit, and with power;" the spirit was given to Christ "without measure;" was poured out on the apostles, to whom he said, "Receive ye the holy spirit;" and Christianity was the "dispensation of the spirit."

The common meaning of "kingdom of heaven," in the New Testament, and its almost, if not altogether, exclusive meaning in this evangelist, is the supernatural dispensation by which Christianity was introduced and established in the earth; the age of miracles in which signs followed in them that believed; and by which Christ's authority and dominion were manifested, from the time of his ascension till the destruction of Jerusalem.

It was expected by the Jews generally that the Christ would be a temporal sovereign; and by Nicodemus and others that he would select the rich and powerful to be the agents of establishing and administering his kingdom. He took an opposite course. He chose the poor for that purpose. The poor were usually the objects of his miraculous benevolence, when exercised in his own person; and of the poor were those who, when the time came for him to employ others, were the instruments for that purpose; and thus the whole class of society to which they belonged was honoured and blessed.

And in this were typified the character and influences of his gospel. From that time to the present it has been the blessing of the poor. It has mitigated the hardships and multiplied the comforts of their condition. It has proclaimed their common nature and common brotherhood with the richest and noblest. It has affected most benignantly both their external condition and their internal feelings. It redeemed them first from domestic slavery, and then from feudal vassalage. It made others reverence humanity in them, and made them reverence humanity in themselves. It has raised a thousand kind asylums for them in their destitution; for the helplessness of their childhood, the accidents of their maturity, and the infirmities of their age. It has directed towards them the justice to which they have a right, and the charity for which they felt the necessity; it has penetrated their minds and hearts, and in countless instances, from being only a little above the brutes, made them only a little lower than the angels. It has made them contented in life, resigned in calamity, hopeful in death. It has verified the moral climax of Christ's description of his work to the messengers of the Baptist, when, as something yet more glorious than all, after healing the sick, the lame, the blind, and even

raising the dead, he concluded with the preaching of the gospel, the proclaiming of glad tidings, to the poor.

Without going further, on the present occasion, into the illustration of this fact, there is a moral and practical inference to be deduced from it, which I would impress on the minds of those whose stations elevate them above the lowest class, and who would imbibe thoroughly the spirit of the religion which they profess—and that is, that the great aim and end of our efforts should be the amelioration of the condition, the physical, mental, and moral condition, of the poor, *i. e.* of the great mass of society.

In what is done for the poor, though much good may be realised both to the recipient and the benefactor, for mercy "is twice blessed—it blesseth him who gives, and him who takes," there is yet large waste both of feeling and of power. There is often a want of judgment in the aid rendered to public institutions, and in the private kindnesses of individuals; many charities are objectionable in their nature, and do less good in the immediate relief they afford than they do harm by encouraging a want of foresight, an improvident spirit, which cannot be effectually helped till the sufferer learns to help himself. There is often a deficiency of union, of coöperation, by which the good realised is the least, instead of the most, possible that the means could produce. There is often a vain attempt to do that in a private capacity which can only be accomplished by public and national acts. Thousands upon thousands of pounds spent, and scores or hundreds of preachers employed, to mitigate the asperities between Catholic and Protestant, never did and never could have produced so much effect as the passing of the Catholic Emancipation Bill. That was a better preaching of the glad tidings of peace to those contending parties. Those who wished for that result, but who thought only of subscribing and preaching, had only a zeal without knowledge; they willed the end, but not the fittest means; they had the merit of desiring a great good, nullified by the culpable inattention which left them in the dark as to the best and only way; those electors who chose legislators, and those legislators who carried the measure, they realised the tendency of Christianity as to that particular case. And, moreover, there is the general want of a great and distinct object, by which benevolence should be

rendered more intense in its emotions, more uniform in its efforts, and, though it may take longer time, more certain and glorious in its results. This great and distinct object, which, as men, as citizens, as Christians, we may find some opportunity of forwarding every day of our lives, is, I think, best expressed in the language just used,—the direction of all public institutions and private efforts to the amelioration of the condition—physical, intellectual, and moral—of the poor, *i.e.* of the great mass of mankind.

How much yet is to be done for the physical condition of man upon the earth, for his bodily wants and enjoyments! Some labour is requisite for the full development of man's bodily powers. There is a point beyond which it becomes injurious to strength, health, and life. That point is passed by a large proportion of the community. Every man ought to work in some way or other, with head or hands, or he ought not to eat; but society ought not to require of any one that he toil to the excess to which countless thousands are compelled to toil to procure daily food. Excessive labour precludes all cultivation of the higher faculties of our nature. Say not that it cannot be helped. It might be helped, to a large extent, promptly; to an indefinite extent, progressively. If there be laws which operate for the pecuniary benefit of certain classes, to enhance the price of articles of common food, whether produced here or imported, it would be helped by such an expression of opinion as would insure the repeal of those laws. If the invention and continually extending introduction of machinery always operates exclusively, in the first instance, to the benefit of the capitalist, it would be helped by arrangements, which could easily be devised, for giving the labourer and mechanic his share of the good which science and art confer upon the world; or at least facilitating the transfer of his strength and skill to some other department. If in every corporation and every trade there be regulations, sometimes legal and sometimes not, by which men are prevented from bringing their labour to a fair and open market, and from changing from one occupation to another with facility when the fluctuations of trade bring distress on that to which they belong, it would be helped by enlightening society as to the injustice and perniciousness of such interpositions. If, by wisely arranged

coöperation, the command of associated numbers over the necessities and comforts of life can be multiplied, then this object would be advanced by promoting such coöperation. If a man were to devote himself, head, heart, and soul, to any one of these purposes, he might probably realise it; and he would do more, infinitely more, towards bettering the physical condition of the poor, than if he were to dispose of the amplest fortune in the country in charitable donations.

How much is yet to be done for improving the intellectual state of the most numerous class! How many thousands there are in this country, this enlightened country, as it yet comparatively is, who cannot read and write! And what does merely being able to read and write amount to, even with saying the Catechism withal? This is not education. Every child born into the world is a rational and immortal being; capable of knowledge, reflection; endowed with memory, reason, judgment, imagination; and created for their development. Every society, so far as it is Christian, receives a new brother in such child; another member of that great family which God has formed of one blood; another heir under that great charter by which the Creator vested the earth in man, for common support and common enjoyment. Why, then, every such child ought to be educated, and well educated. Its powers should not perish for lack of culture. If its parents be too ignorant to prize, or too poor to purchase, education, society should provide it. Society should not allow a child to be uneducated throughout the wide extent of the empire; it forfeits thereby the moral right to command its services or to punish its crimes. Did not those burning stacks which of late illumined county after county proclaim—all-eloquent tongues of fire!—that England had not sufficiently taught her children for them to distinguish what would alleviate from what could only aggravate their wretchedness? The people must be educated; not in the stinted, flimsy, and useless way to which our charity-schools too commonly confine themselves; still less by the more deplorably inadequate machinery of Sunday-schools, often only a pretext for making them repeat by rote the catch-words of some sectarian creed; but so as to inform and rationalise them, so as to endow the human animal with mind, and call the torpid soul into conscious

existence and activity. The expenses of early universal education would scarcely exceed, I do not believe they would exceed, the loss sustained in cheating and robbery and other crimes, and the confinement and other punishments, with the costly apparatus for conviction and infliction, which would be thereby prevented. In these times, the millions will inevitably learn that they are the physical strength of the community; it is for their friends to teach the further lesson that its blind exertion will only pull down the temple of society on their own heads as well as on those of their superiors, and make the whole one tremendous ruin. But this is a low motive. Wherever there is man, there ought also to be intelligence. In proportion as the kingdom of heaven comes in Christian hearts, will the poor, by their spirit, be blessed with knowledge. Let each bear this in mind, and promote it as he can, and when and where he can.

The amelioration of the moral condition of the poor cannot be extensively effected without, and would naturally follow from, that of their physical and intellectual condition. These should go hand in hand with direct efforts for their religious instruction and improvement. For these efforts there is a large field. How can we say that the gospel is preached to the poor, while we wait for the poor to come to its preaching? which so many there are that cannot do, so many more that will not, and to all of whom it should be sent, and sent in the spirit of its Author. Provision for themselves too often occupies men almost exclusively, in spiritual as well as temporal concerns. There has for some time existed in America, there has commenced here, a ministry for the poor, sent to them, "to seek and to save that which is lost." Nor will religion ever thoroughly penetrate and pervade the great mass of society till it become more completely and influentially universal in the conceptions of the religious themselves. It must penetrate and pervade all studies of the mind, all affections of the heart, all pursuits of the life. Religion is that vital love which, in the Deity, gave existence to the universe, and which, in us, is the bond that binds man to man and man to God. Is not the hope of this becoming universal—far remote as that result may be—an impulse to present good, a source of present usefulness, a spring of present joy?

When the great mass of society shall come under the influence of the soul-felt conviction that all we are brethren, and that God is our common Father in heaven, there will be an end of the impurities, and vices, and graspings, and envyings, and strivings, which now present a scene so loathsome and degrading. Society will then readily fall into such order, that man will not be continually feeling that he is out of his proper position, and must struggle with some other to gain it, and rise on his fall. Each will fill his own sphere, and move in harmony with others. Men will rise according to their capacity, be estimated according to their worth, be rewarded according to their works; and, acting here on the principle of the future kingdom of heaven, they will realise a portion of its blessedness.

Think not of the remoteness of such a state of things; it is that apprehension which makes it so remote as it is; it will be the less remote, the more distinctly it is anticipated. Call it not a mere vision; for so far as we can appreciate the principles of revelation, and decipher the history of humankind, this is the end towards which Providence is tending in all its diversified workings. "There are manifold operations, but the same spirit." Dismiss it not as a speculation, which, however benevolent and pleasant, still is but a speculation, and has no immediate influence—practical influence—on our own individual feelings and conduct. Indeed, that is not the fact. It is calculated to have an immediate and practical influence on our hearts and lives. In contemplating the final destination of human society upon earth, its tendencies towards universal association for universal good, in the bond of a religion whose power is love, we are acquiring a practical guidance for our exertions and charities from day to day. They become more systematic, and therefore more efficient. They are not mere coruscations of kindness, flitting across our horizon, and leaving it again in darkness, but emanations of one central orb of light, fixed in the firmament, and shining with unsetting and unvarying lustre. How little he does in his benevolence who looks no further than removing the particular evil which may chance to be presented, or gratifying the particular sympathy which may chance to be excited, compared with him whose feelings work for themselves a defined channel, springing from a distinct source, flowing

towards a distinct object, and in the minutest efforts keeping in view that great and glorious purpose. Give men thus an aim, and good is doing, not only in the act itself of charity, but in the whole of life, in all that influences others to be like-minded, in conversation and correspondence, in the intercourse of business and in that of pleasure, in the crowd and in retirement, in the civic hall and in the temple of God. Perhaps there are many benevolent but aimless men, who do as many acts of particular kindness in their lives as Howard himself did. It was the distinctness and uniformity of object that gave to his conduct such power, and made him one of the world's benefactors. In contemplating the final destination of human society, we find not only guidance but support. It is a strong hope, the world's advancement, in whose assurance we little feel many disappointments on behalf of humanity, which else would plunge us in anguish and despondency. Having ascertained the direction in which the great tide of things is flowing, it does not dishearten us that here and there is a backward current, which we know can be but local or temporary. The scope of philanthropic vision is much wider than that of the acutest political perspicacity. Political measures may be lost or carried; dynasties may be expelled or restored; constitutions may be framed, remodelled, or abrogated; but in the one case society can only make the advance for which it is prepared, and in the other it cannot be thrown back far beyond the point for which it has ripened. There is a spirit in the earth, and destined to rule the earth, by which the poor, the mass of mankind, shall be blessed, and which will make them heirs of the kingdom of heaven, the only universal and everlasting monarchy. In contemplating the destiny of mankind, we quicken our love for mankind. Our hearts overflow with that intense and yet expanded benevolence which makes man perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect. This love is perfection. As the imagination of Christ dwelt on the glorious vision of a redeemed world, he was strengthened to accomplish the world's redemption. The universal good thus becomes our own individual good; it is realised in our minds, longed for by our hearts, and striven for with our energies. This is the spiritual life in us, an emanation of Almighty love. And so we ascend towards, as well as trace out, our own destiny in that of man-

kind. The full, proportionate, and perfect development of our nature is that for which we were called into existence; that which the gospel stimulates us to realise as far as possible here, and promises us in ampler measure hereafter, when, by the transformation of death, this mortal shall put on immortality. And it is God who is working all this, in us and by us, in others and by others; he is all in all, the Universal Spirit; and in that Spirit the universe is blessed. Let our bosoms glow with his love, and our voices sing his praise, making melody in our hearts.

Sermon VIII.—The Law of Labour.

"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat" (2 Thess. iii. 10).

The First Epistle to the Thessalonians seems to have been so interpreted as to induce the expectation that the end of the world was at hand. This expectation was the occasion, or the pretext, of various disorders. Amongst other evils was this, that some of the disciples abandoned their worldly occupations, and claimed support from the funds, which had been, it is probable, collected only for the maintenance of the poor. They thought they had only to exist till the great convulsion came. The apostle, having first explained that this speedy anticipation was a mistake, proceeds to reprobate the irregularities which had resulted. He especially reminds them of the example he had set, and the precepts he had given, before that urgent occasion for their application had arisen. While with them, he had laboured with his own hands, and had commanded "that if any would not work, neither should he eat." They had, therefore, been rebuked by anticipation —by language and by conduct which was not got up for the particular emergency, but which had internal evidence of its arising out of the permanent spirit and general principles of the gospel. The rebuke was the better adapted to impress their minds with a sense of its truth and justice. Often has this early instance of the errors and wanderings of enthusiasm been repeated or imitated, and it has been

needful, like the apostle, to appeal to the plain and everlasting principles of morality.

And the apostle's maxim *is* a valid appeal to those principles. The laws of revelation are the laws of nature; and the precepts of Christianity are expositions of the dealings of Providence. The text declares concerning the individual, that which creation declares of universal humanity. The earth is the Lord's, and he hath given it to the sons of men; and mankind collectively have a divinely chartered property in, and dominion over, the land, the waters, the air, and their various animate and inanimate productions; but it is only by labour that this gift is accepted, that this property is realised, that this dominion is exercised, and that the treasures of the world are rendered available for the purposes of support and of enjoyment. Profusely as earth pours forth her stores to the hand of industry, it is only to the hand of industry that she pours them forth; and notwithstanding the spontaneous fertility of some particular spots, it is true of the human race, as a whole, that if they did not work, neither could they eat. Without toil, all the palmy state and beautiful adornments of existence, all the memorials of the past and the prospects of futurity, all the overflowings of intellect and the comforts of civilisation, would disappear; the populous city would soon become a wilderness; marshes and forests would resume their ancient reign over the wide lands redeemed by art and industry; the human race would dwindle to a few savages, whose subsistence would be not more wretched than precarious; and the world would retrograde, first to a moral and mental, and then almost to a physical, chaos. Human labour is the hand of the Lord by which, in nature's wilderness, gardens of Eden are planted, and watered, and stored with all that is pleasant to the sight and good for food, till, in their energetic fruitfulness, there grow the trees of knowledge and of life. And it is a wise and blessed condition of things. This necessity for labour has been the mainspring of human improvement. It has stimulated inventions, and conducted to discoveries, and developed sciences, and organised society. "Labour and sorrow" may have been companions, but indolence and wretchedness would have been everlastingly associated. That companionship is only for a time. Dignity and joy are labour's offspring.

The infinitely blessed Being is a being of eternal and essential activity. The language of man's perfect exemplar was, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The natural, the revealed, the moral *law of labour,* is a *law of love.*

Very much of the happiness of the world and of individuals depends on this law of labour being rightly understood and cheerfully obeyed. It then becomes the abundant source of enjoyment and improvement in the community, in the household, and in the church. To evade, break, or misapply it, is to produce injustice, degradation, and suffering. Yet by vanity, idleness, or selfishness, are these experiments incessantly made, and, in spite of uniform failure, incessantly repeated. The opposite extremes of society both furnish instances, and both injurious to society and destructive to the individuals, of attempts to live without labour.

Heavy as is the pressure on the lower classes of the community, it is yet beyond doubt that great numbers have voluntary recourse to beggary or theft from impatience of the restrained life of regular industry, and the hope of obtaining a larger supply of their wants and desires with greater ease. It is useless preaching *to* such; they do not commonly present themselves for moral instruction. It may not be useless to preach concerning them to others, whose very opinions, properly expressed at proper times, may do much to mitigate and ultimately remove the evil. Children of industry, respectable, thriving, moral, what would you think of yourselves, if some member of your own family were left, from very infancy, without any care to form his mind or heart; if every bad passion were allowed to grow unchecked; if he were turned out into the streets, to associate with the vilest, and catch every physical and moral infection; if, as might be expected, he soon sounded the depths of profligacy and iniquity; if to him all reputation was the admiration of successful trickery or violence, and all enjoyment, the indulgence of the grossest animal appetites; if, to the thick darkness of his soul, not only the pleasures of intellect and taste, but the worship of God and the hopes of religion, became utterly inconceivable; if he only felt and knew of society, its interests, claims, laws, and order, that with him they were at war; he preying on it, and at last becoming its victim by that death of a dog in which civilised society takes leave of its abandoned offspring?

—I shall not repeat, what would you think of yourselves, because your minds cannot get to that stage of the supposition; and you say it is an impossible case altogether. And so it is, for you individually; but is it not the fact collectively? and is not this the history of thousands, whom God made of one blood with ourselves? And is this a case for society, as if in injured innocency, to make, from generation to generation, a penal application of the apostle's maxim? No; it is for society, of which each one of us is a responsible portion, to seek the better course—of prevention. The great prevention is moral education. No good man should rest till this is secured for every child born into the world. A contemptible fraction of the public money spent in warfare during the last half-century would secure this for our country. It can only be done by a great public act; and that is the necessary result of the aggregate of enlightened and determined individual opinions. Work at this, and you will be spreading for futurity the gladsome feast of a social redemption of the most depraved class of the community.

Let us advert to the other extreme of society. There is the same mistake. The inheritors or possessors of property think themselves a privileged class, exempt from this natural and Christian law. They imagine they have nothing to do in the world but to consult their own gratification. Providence punishes their shortsighted selfishness, and executes upon them the threatenings of the divine enactment. Though endowed with mountains of wealth, an idle character is a worthless character. Its tendency is to frivolity, vice, and wretchedness. When by the social and legal guarantee to a man of property which his own hands have not earned, but those of another, we tell him, that for him this law of God shall be suspended, and that though he work not, yet shall he eat, and revel in luxurious abundance, we minister to the worst passions and propensities. His pride is inflated with his immunities. He is a creature of privilege, not a brother of mankind. *He* belongs to one caste, and the hewers of wood and drawers of water belong to another. There must be stimulus for him to occupy himself; and the readiest stimulus is often the worst. Pleasure becomes his business, and licentiousness his pursuit. He looks jealously on the powers, the rights, even the mental attainments, of the lower classes. His chief public concern

is with the defence of the interests of the few against those of the many. He is essentially an immoral character. Society has claims on him, though not enforced by the penalty of literal starvation. The duty of a man who finds himself so situated is to repay society for securing to him the earnings of another, by voluntary labour for its benefit. He should thus made good the deficiency of his moral title. He should create for himself a work. He should inquire in what his talents, character, opportunities, station, best enable him to serve the community. He should take charge of some of the many machines of usefulness at which busier hands cannot obey the dictates of kind hearts to labour. He will reap the reward. He may thus become a useful man, a good man, a great man, a happy man. If his self-chosen path be that of legislation, he will be the friend of wise and equal laws, keeping pace with and promoting the progress of humanity, and elevating the condition of the most numerous class; if that of literature, he will not pervert his powers for the sake of mere notoriety, but aim at those intellectual toils which require leisure and opulence, and have the reward of lasting usefulness; if that of charity, he may give it that wise direction for want of which it has so often aggravated the evils it sought to remedy. The world is before him, and only asks him not to be a cumberer of the ground. Let him work, individually or socially, mentally, physically, politically, charitably,—only let him work; and if it be the work of our Father in heaven, he shall eat of the fruit of the tree of life eternal.

This same word *work* is often applied to that which, in an honourable sense, does not deserve the name; and often withheld from that by which it is deserved. It is to be hoped the world will soon grow too wise to let so much labour run to waste. How large a portion of the attention, the powers, the time, the means, of almost every man of business are consumed by that system of rivalry and competition which pervades almost all occupations, and which is only so much loss to the community! The greatest droduction, and the readiest change of commodities, are all that mankind want, or derive advantage by. This, and this alone, is the work by which the world eats or profits. The restrictions by which a man is prevented from pursuing in any place any vocation for which he is qualified;

the competition by which one is ruined, while another gains a more or less complete monopoly; the complication, as in legal proceedings and documents, produced by the interests of a class which gains thereby, at a double loss to the community;—these, and a thousand like things, which might be enumerated, are labour wasted for want of a better understanding in society. Christianity should make us desire, and, as far as we can, promote arrangements by which all toil tends directly to good, physical, intellectual, or moral. And there is an opposite evil; there is a prejudice cherished by some against all occupations which do not bear upon man's physical existence and material wants. The principle of the text demands a wider meaning of the word "work." "Man shall not live by bread alone." There is a life of the soul, of the intellectual and spiritual nature, cherished by those influences of knowledge, truth, beauty, harmony, which are influxes on man of his Maker's spirit; and the communication of which is certainly a not less noble labour than that for the meat which perisheth. He who acts upon the reason, imagination, or feelings of his fellow-men, by manifestations of his own, so as to enlarge and supply their capacities of pure enjoyment, he works, and ought to have his reward; he who explores the arcana of science, ascertaining what God does, and on what principles, in the heavens above and in the earth beneath; he who deciphers the monuments, and tells the tale of man, as he has lived, thought, felt, acted, suffered, in lands that are distant, and in ages that are gone; he who has the plastic power of genius, that creates its worlds in others' souls and senses; he who accumulates, arranges, and simplifies for the young, or for the multitude, the contributions of sages, historians, poets, artists; feeding the mind to a higher maturity by giving heavenly bread to eat which it knew not of; and he who guides the divine light of love and truth into darkened minds, and sends it home to cold hearts, and has the ministry of reconciliation to recover the world to its God,—these all may be deemed unproductive by the low-minded calculator, who only asks, "What shall we eat, what shall we drink, and wherewithal shall we be clothed?" But they produce that which makes life worthy of the name; they earn at least all that the world usually gives them; they endow society with a

wealth more precious than that of the husbandman and vine-dresser, which else would only feed men on the level of the beasts that perish; they work, and let them eat; for if there be truth in their speculations and hopes, if the effects which mind has produced by them, and such as them, in the past, be a presage of the future, theirs will be the agency of so enlightening mankind, that society will become, not the arena of strife and the scene of depravity which it now is, but an association for mutual instruction, enjoyment, and improvement, where every one shall be placed according to his capacity, and rewarded according to his works.

In those smaller communities, in households, families, circles of associates and friends, how much may be done, quite independently of and beyond all that is required for bodily support, for the common purposes of education, and for the maintenance of external appearances! Each one may and should do something to deserve well of the whole. One has the knowledge that instructs, another the accomplishment that charms, another the activity that serves. Children even may do much, by their attention, docility, respectfulness, for the comfort of those most distant from them in age and feeling. And what may not woman accomplish? The customs and notions which restrict her from much, yet leave her this sphere, and she may fill it with blessedness. Happy they who have witnessed the demonstration of this power, when it is, with her, a study, an art, a science, a work, to multiply, by all the means within her reach, the pure and pleasurable emotions of all to whom her influence extends; when there is not a peculiar taste that she does not remember and consult, not an infirmity that she does not carefully avoid irritating, and gently prevent others from wounding; when, without increased expense, a delicate taste makes every object and arrangement seem more than commonly beautiful and harmonious; children and servants yielding implicit obedience to the only law that can command it—and *that* must be wisely administered to command it—the law of love; the ordinary broils and troubles and misfortunes, as they are called, of families, anticipated by a keen foresight; every day, in what is generally its mere filling up, the getting through the time by each and all as they can, having

its peculiar tendency of enjoyment or improvement impressed on it by the directing spirit; and withal no ostentation, no boast or bustle, no ignorance of or indifference to the great affairs that involve the good of society, but all being merely the silent, systematic application to her task of a sound mind and a lovely heart. In the imagination of such a character, I have described a work and enforced a duty. There is scarcely a house in which there are not annoyances when there might be enjoyment; in which there are not, every day, some painful sensations which might be pleasurable ones; in which female judgment, tact, thoughtfulness, and kindness, acting in an enlightened, conscientious, benevolent, and persevering manner, might not increase, by portions separately so small as to be indescribable, but in the aggregate a mighty sum, the amount of human happiness. Solomon says that "a continual dropping in a very rainy day, and a contentious woman, are alike;" and the simile describes woman's benignant influences too, which, with that kindly dropping on the proudest pile of man's best achievements, thus soothed, supported, and stimulated, will wear an inscription lasting as the hieroglyphics on Egyptian columns, but commemorating better deeds, and preserving a more blessed memory.

I spoke of the church as under this law of labour. In the kingdom of Christ flourish no gilded idlenesses, which toil not, neither do they spin. It is a kingdom of righteousness and peace and joy; but the righteousness comes first, the peace and joy only follow; and "if any will not work, neither shall he eat." No man can have the full fruition of Christian blessings and hopes in his own bosom, who has been criminally neglectful of diffusing them in the world. The gospel imposes on each, according to his opportunity and ability, a work of zeal and labour of love: "To do good, and to communicate, forget not." It is the forgetfulness of your business as a Christian. Men are too apt, even in religion, even in the Christian religion, to think only, or too exclusively, of themselves—ministers for their own instruction, chapels for their own assembling, books for their own reading; and there an end. Let this be done; but in duty as in prophecy, "the end is not yet;" there is more, not of calamity, but of good, to be

realised. We have need to look more systematically, and act more energetically, for the diffusion of religious knowledge, with all its happy concomitants of moral principle and unfailing consolation.

And of individual exertion and individual reward, the text is eminently true, as to religion. He who takes no thought nor pains for moral improvement is sure to deteriorate. His indolence will bring on him the curse of moral starvation or disease. There is always something to be done for self-correction or self-improvement. There is always in religion need of the emphatic injunction, "Whatever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might." Who is so wise in the things of God, as to have no ignorance left which study may remove? Who so free from fault as that heart and life offer no crooked things to be made straight—no need nor place for reformation? Who so bright in all Christian graces, that there is no quality yet to be added to perfect the starry circle of his crown of glory? Let *them* be idle. But they cannot. For in the wisdom they have acquired is this—that increase of divine knowledge is the increase of divine enjoyment. In the follies they have corrected is this—the folly of ever resting while yet more remains to be done. In the graces they have gained is this—the activity that urges on, and will eternally urge on, towards infinite perfection. The more man does in religion, the more he is able to do, and is desirous of accomplishing. And short enough is life for the moral probation assigned to it—for the preparation we should make for that immortal world on which at death we enter. Soon perhaps may the Master's voice summon us from our toil to our rest, from our rest to judgment. There, a proportionate recompense awaits each and all of us. "Work while it is day; the night is coming."

Sermon IX.—Gather up the Fragments.

"Gather up the fragments, that nothing be lost" (John vi. 12).

This direction is not more remarkable for the homely and practical wisdom which it contains than it is also for the extraordinary circumstances under which it was de-

livered. This plain precept of carefulness, economy, and frugality occurs in a narrative of the supernatural—follows the multiplication of so small a portion of food as five barley loaves and two fishes into sufficient to satisfy the hunger of five thousand persons, and introduces the consummation of that miracle in the quantity which remained, and which confirmed the impression on the minds of the multitude, so that they said of Christ, "This is of a truth that prophet which should come into the world." There is, therefore, a double lesson to be learned from it; the one direct, by considering merely the force and spirit of the injunction in itself; the other inferential, growing out of the comparison of that injunction with the recorded transaction. And this last view of the matter is by no means unimportant, but may be subservient to our preservation from mistake in the application of the precept to our conduct in life, and may further open to us such views as will expand, elevate, and dignify the direct application of that injunction, and enhance its importance and utility.

First, then, we attend to the obvious and direct import of this precept. It applies to the every-day concerns of all except the very few whose ample and superfluous means secure to them the command of all they desire, so far as wealth can purchase it. It is equivalent to the household proverb of "Waste not, want not,"—a proverb as good as if it were Solomon's, and, indeed, the same in substance with several in his collection. To all who have to struggle, as so many must, for support or comfort, diligence in the attaining of their resources is not more essential than carefulness in the employment of those resources. The hand of the diligent will *not* make rich, or even usually preserve from distress, unless the eye of economy watch over its earnings. The fragments which many neglect are those by the gathering of which others fill their baskets and increase their stores. A little carelessness in scattering will baffle much carefulness in accumulating. Political economy has been called a new science; domestic economy is an old one, but not half so perfect, either in theory or practice, in proportion to its age. One of its commonest defects is a heedlessness of those fragments of expenditure which, separately seeming insignificant, in the aggregate become, perhaps, of vital importance. Women, especially, should have clear

heads, quick eyes, and steady hands for these matters. Their gleanings may make all the difference between a good harvest and a bad one. To borrow an illustration from our Lord's teaching, they should pick up the crumbs which fall from the table; if they only feed the dog that watches at the gate, it is something gained: they may be needed for the children themselves. It is impossible to pursue this topic into detail. Much might be done to mitigate the privations of poverty, and facilitate the struggles of the class which is above poverty, but whose struggle is in many cases yet more arduous and anxious.

The precept applies to the improvement of time. No one resolves deliberately on sinking years, or even months, in utter idleness and unprofitableness. And yet the waste even of years is no uncommon thing in human life. They go in fragments. The years are spent in weeks or days, and the days in hours, and the hours in minutes. We reckon twenty-four hours to the day; but when we speak of the day in reference to man's voluntary power over it, its disposability for purposes of improvement or enjoyment, a very large deduction must be made. Taking away the seasons of rest and food, and passing from place to place, even those whose circumstances give them most command over their time have only a day of little more than half that amount. Their loss of an hour a day is a loss of nearly a month a year—a loss of almost five years in a life of sixty. But with the great majority, the day which they can command is only a fraction of this. Their time is necessarily sold for the purchase of the means of physical support. They have bought bread with it, and it is gone. Their day, their profitable and disposable day, for intellectual and moral purposes, is seldom more than three or four hours; and in wasting only half an hour each day, they fling away ten years out of their threescore and ten, should they have so many. A few calculations of this sort would make them as astonished as the disciples were at the baskets which their fragments filled. There are quite as surprising things in nature as in miracle; and they both enforce the same moral admonitions, and warn us against despising fragments. Gather them up: if nothing should be lost, surely not *time*, the most precious of all, and the most hopelessly irrecoverable when once it is wasted.

We apply the precept to the preservation, by literary or other means, of the remains of things gone by, but of which it behoves us to have what knowledge we can obtain, because the past was the commencement, and contained the germs, of the present in which we live, and of the future in which we are so deeply interested. Extraordinary men, peculiar modes of life, states of society, systems of philosophy, nations, languages, religions, have fled and left the world; and if we cannot realise them in our minds, so as to have an adequate and perfect notion, let us at least collect the fragments, which may teach us much of wisdom, and impress lessons for the sake of which they existed in the plan of Providence. In some way or other, all traces of the past are available; all physical traces of a former state of the globe itself,—"fragments of an earlier world," the petrifaction which had life, the strata which were the bed of ocean; all material remains of human art,—the coin with its "image and superscription," the implements of war or industry, pillars and pyramids; all relics of obsolete civil or religious polity,—modes of government and modes of worship which are no longer practised on the earth, with the manners and habits, even to the very recesses of domestic life, which they produced; the literature of bygone ages, and not merely the laboured works written for posterity, but the occasional and temporary productions which throw so much more light on the individuality of the intellect of a generation; and the incidental indications of character, of mind and heart, in illustrious individuals, which unfold the depths or point to the heights of humanity itself,—these are the true fragments of antiquity, the remains of the feasting of the multitude that once sat in their ranks on the sunny side of the mountain of existence, but are now in the dark valley of death below. Let them, by all whose means and pursuits allow, be gathered up. If many a brave vessel of human power, greatness, and splendour has been wrecked in the storms of time, let us yet pick up what the tide throws on the shore of our age and country.

There is a moral economy which the text may be taken as encouraging,—a precaution against waste in the means of happiness and goodness. There is abundance of both, very much neglected, alike by the votaries of virtue and of enjoyment, who ought to be the same persons, and who

will be so in proportion as knowledge shows that goodness is only the means, and the only means, of happiness. Those who see God, the infinite spirit of love, beauty, harmony, and wisdom, in his works—and they are the true religionists—will be ever gathering from the ground, as it were, some fragment of pure pleasure. The flight of a bird, or the construction of a flower; the blending of colour in the clouds, and the order of motion in the waves; beautiful analogies in the material and spiritual world, which the mere logician scorns, or sees not; oracles of nature in the prattling of a child; and emanations of an all-pervading spirit of love in the commonest intercourse of life;—in these they will see divine helps to the discipline and blessedness of their souls, which are not to be despised because the theologian may not put them in his catalogue of means of grace, or the systematising utilitarian number them amongst the constituents of well-being. What God in his bounty disdains not to scatter, man should not neglect to gather. It is not by the set and formal use of great agencies that either virtue or happiness is realised, so much as by a disposition which passes by nothing that can minister to the object. A beautiful vision made the patriarch say: "Lo! God is here, and I knew it not;" and so he felt the Divine omnipresence. Though Christ went up to Jerusalem to the temple, at the great solemnity, his mind was not so full but that he heard by the way-side the plaintive voice that cried for mercy on the Son of David. The world is full of "ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation;" of agencies to elicit and strengthen the dispositions of the good, who are thereby ultimately, and most even now, the happy. To disregard them is not more ungrateful towards him than unwise as to ourselves.

I said that this precept was remarkable from its standing in the history in connection with a miraculous event. We are struck with the proximity of the homeliest proverbial phraseology with the splendours of supernatural power. It is one of those contrasts which at first seem unnatural; but which, on closer observation, show the truest harmony. Christ's character was full of them, and yet that character was the perfection of human nature. He exhibited in abundance what are commonly accounted extremes and incompatibilities. He was most profound in

his doctrine, and yet enunciated it in terms of child-like simplicity; he was fervently and exaltedly devout, and yet most thoroughly practical and social; he was gentle and tender, melting in compassion, and yet had that intensity of purpose which defies the world, and tramples on the grave. And the fact is, that dispositions and faculties which are often accounted incongruous, and which, when only developed in an inferior degree, are so, in their highest manifestations become perfectly accordant, and mutually strengthening and coöperative. We are accustomed to say that argument is not to be expected of this man, because he is oratorical; nor eloquence of that, because his mind is so logical: and if they have but an imperfect degree of those powers, it may be so; if they have them amply, it is just the reverse. The acuteness of Athenian intellect in antiquity was never more strenuously grappled with than by Demosthenes, the prince of orators. In the records of the senate of our own country, the same names and the same speeches may be cited for examples of both—of argument the most convincing, and of eloquence the most inspiring or overpowering. Jeremy Taylor was the most subtile of casuists, as well as the most luxuriant of preachers. The bard of *Paradise Lost* was the Defender of the People of England. Every metaphysical student knows that Shakespeare was not less a philosopher than a dramatist. No man ever in sternness of purpose surpassed Howard; it indicated, not the weakness, but the might of his benevolent principle. We frequently praise the decidedness of Theophilus Lindsey; there was also in him a slowness, caution, and forbearance, which, if separately contemplated, would lead many to pronounce impossible the high determination which he evinced. The most decided are really the most circumspect; the most kind may also be the most immovable. Much of the notion of incompatibility, in what seem contrasted qualities, arises from ignorance, selfishness, and envy. People who feel that they want one particular quality which attracts admiration, assume that therefore they have the opposite. Such a one is religious, and therefore gloomy, says a votary of what is called pleasure, but who really knows nothing of what true enjoyment is. He is a genius, and therefore has not common sense, says another, who has not

the common sense to know that "common sense" describes nothing but what, with much more, is included in genius, as the first half-dozen pages of a book must have been read by him who knows the volume by heart. The prejudice might be traced through a thousand forms. They would all come to this: How very strange that these homely, plain words in the text should have been spoken by one who had just wrought a superhuman work, in the name and with the power of God! and the reply is, Not strange at all; for he was the agent of that Providence which spread abroad the arch of heaven, and fashions the blade of grass—which rules the stars in their courses, and guides the sparrow's flight—which fills infinity, and creates and floats the atoms in the sunbeam. And he had risen, as it is the ultimate destiny of humanity to rise, into the image of his Father in heaven. And so completely is this true, that we may easily show, in each particular of the literal application of the text, that it is best fulfilled by those who bring to it the greatest enlargement of mind: so that what seems a minute drudgery is most efficiently performed by those who bring to it a generality of principle, an expansiveness of view, and a loftiness of purpose, with which it has too hastily been deemed incompatible.

To take the first form of the admonition, and regard it only in the light of pecuniary and household economy: there may, it is true, be a blind niggardliness which, in its antipathy to spending, demolishes the very purposes of saving; as there may be an indefinite talk of household arrangements which has nothing of practical application and tact; but the one is no more economy than the other is principle. The object of gathering the fragments was that nothing should be lost; but every thing is lost which does not, sooner or later, minister to enjoyment. The problem of frugality is to make the smallest amount of means produce the greatest amount of comfort. That problem is surely well solved in proportion to the increase of intellect and knowledge. I believe that generally there is more waste in the dwellings of the poor and ignorant than in those of the class next above them. It is because they are ignorant as well as poor. Generally much more might be done with the same means than is done, but for prejudices which only a more intellectual female education can root

out. Better acquaintance with the comparative worth of money, as expended in different ways; better acquaintance with the nature, origin, and changes of the different materials of food and clothing; better acquaintance with the workings of mind and feeling and character, so as to observe how the power of increasing comfort is modified by peculiarities in every individual,—*i. e.* a better education, in the principles of natural science, of art, of business, of mental and moral philosophy; these are what, so far from unfitting woman for her sphere, would give her tenfold power to fill it, from the same resources, with peace, improvement, and happiness. Those who best know the lower classes say that instruction of this kind is their greatest want; certainly it is often a desideratum in their superiors. Well-instructed intelligence, mind which, by its general acquirement and power, proves the reality of its acquirement and power in this unwisely despised department also, will so gather up the fragments, that ignorant parsimony and ignorant profusion shall almost believe it has wrought the miracle too.

And so in the economy of time; it is ever most rigidly and wisely enforced by those whose minds are familiar with the contemplation of affairs of longest date, with the work of centuries and ages, and with meditation on eternity itself. No one heeds his minutes more than he whose mind is profoundly impressed with his destiny to immortality. Instead of there being any thing unworthy of learning, talent, or genius in such frugality, their possessors have ever been most addicted to it. Priestley, with all his multitudinous attainments, and with all his whole days to add to them, was more tenacious of what would be called an odd half-hour, than many who have but few hours in the week to devote directly and voluntarily to the cultivation of their minds, hearts, and characters. In fact, it requires some comparative (at least) expansion of views, and greatness of purpose, to make men feel what is meant by the loss of time, to create meaning in the expression, and inspire the feeling of grief and degradation by which it should be accompanied. The famous exclamation, "I have lost a day!" was a melancholy testimony how many days are lost by millions, without emotion. It was the revealer, and soon to be the possessor, of immortality, who

said, "I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day; the night cometh, when no man can work." And in the gathering of which we spake, of the relics of past men and times, whatever antiquarian affectation there may have been, the most diligent accumulators have also been men who from such materials could rectify the falsehoods of long-received history, place before us the men and manners of other generations as no professed historians had done, or throw a flood of light on the principles and progress of human nature. Imbued with the noblest principles of science, a few fragments have enabled them to reconstruct the temples of antiquity in all their pomp, and realise to our conceptions the bygone world.

The minor virtues, the frequently occurring enjoyments, the minutiæ of morals and happiness, so far from incongruity, have a close affinity with the broadest principles of truth, and the most majestic qualities of character. I have little faith in the very good people of every-day life who are confessedly, and almost boastfully, unequal to the great sacrifices and exertions which are sometimes bounden duties. The great principles and virtues are the trunk of which the others are the foliage, which we are not accustomed to see flourish independently. An enlightened and comprehensive notion of an omnipresent and beneficent Providence is the likeliest preparation for finding

> "Tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in every thing."

An enlarged perception of the divine plan of instruction disposes us to elicit lessons of wisdom from a thousand sources, while ignorant superstition is waiting for the oracle. That every thing is from God and for good to all, makes good felt where else its existence would not have been suspected. The fragments of enjoyment are best gathered up by those whose imaginations have expanded to the hope of a universe of felicity. All incidental helps to the formation of character tell most on those with whom the training of themselves to excellence is a deliberate purpose and a determined pursuit. It is here as in physics; the minutest atoms are attracted, by a force proportioned to its mass, towards the mountain or the globe.

Let us learn, then, never, in affecting the great, to despise the minute; nor to think of enlarging the whole

while neglecting the parts; nor of doing much in years while insensible of the waste of hours; nor of having the happiness of any portion of time while we aim not at that of eternity. Sound philosophy is the combination of accumulation and accuracy in particulars, with comprehensive generalisation. Moral excellence is analogous; and so is the spirit of religion. Christianity has its prayer for the child, and redemption for the world; and the prayer would not be so good, were not the redemption so stupendous. That not a single sensation of pleasure, or the most trifling impulse of benevolence, should be despised or crushed, is the lesson which commends itself most to him who most enters into the plan of infinite wisdom and the prospect of universal happiness. The Omnipotence of the universal Creator ordains that of the merest fragments of his works nothing should be lost. And nothing shall. The withered hope, the broken spirit, the imperfect character, the moral fragments of the present state, shall be gathered up for nobler forms and combinations, as out of dissolving elements shall arise the new heavens and earth wherein righteousness and blessedness will ever dwell.

Sermon X.—The Social Example of Christ.

"The Son of man is come eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners!" (Luke vii. 34.)

A CALUMNIOUS accusation is seldom an unmixed falsehood, even when directed against the purest character. Though it be not truth, it yet will often serve as a finger-post to point the path in which we may journey towards the truth. Scandalous as was the description of Christ, which he himself quoted from his enemies, in the text, it yet was a description which malice itself never would or could have given of John the Baptist. What they said of him was, that he was a demoniac. The fact was, that the one was a stern and solitary man, and the other bland and social; and the fact was used to float the falsehood into the public mind, and give it currency. Malignity is generally shrewd enough to fix itself on some disposition which is virtuous or vicious according to the degree of its indul-

gence, and then the comparatively easy work of simple exaggeration or diminution may serve to sully the lustre of the brightest character, and hold up the best men as the worst. But the very process shows that there is something to be exaggerated or diminished, and guides us to what that something is. Without any other evidence than the calumny in the text, we should have had proof that Christ was of a social disposition. We should have known from it, that he was accustomed to mingle with mankind on different principles from those which prevailed among the supercilious hypocrites who took the lead in the Jewish society of that age. We might, with very little other knowledge of him, have been able to perceive that the latter part of this charge, false in the sense in which it was meant to be received, of sympathy with the despised persons referred to, was true in another sense, and as honourable a truth as could be recorded of him. The friend of publicans and sinners must have been a disinterested and generous friend. He must have had a soul full of benevolence and energy. He was the friend, not only of the friendless, but of the scorned and trampled on. There is moral heroism in the allegation; it gives a glimpse of a great work of beneficence. His friendship to such must to them have been recovery, deliverance, salvation. And so the curse became a blessing, the shame a glory; and Pharisaic malice, like Balaam of old, overruled by the spirit of truth, with which it thought to tamper for its base purposes, hears its own constrained utterance doing homage to the excellence it meant to vilify.

The truth thus gathered inferentially is abundantly confirmed by the facts of the gospel narrative. They describe Christ as eminently social. Not social in the sense in which vain and empty creatures are, who are unaccustomed to, and dread, solitude; who live not only without God in the world, but without mind in the world; who suppose *living* is to see and be seen, to be talked to and to talk; who find the seclusion intolerably wearisome which might be intensely interesting, and utterly vacant which might be most amply occupied. This is not sociality, but inanity, which seeks kindred inanity for its relief. Christ was much alone. Alone for days and nights on the moun-

tain side; alone for weeks in the recesses of the wilderness. There is no strength of mind, nor depth of reflection, nor solid worth of character, without solitude. There is no progressiveness without it, and that is essential both to mental and moral greatness. But he was no solitary dreamer, no monk or hermit, no mere meditator even on the things of heaven, no mere student even of the truth of God. He was in willing and frequent intercourse with mankind. He sat at meat with the Pharisees, in their ostentatious hospitality. He turned not from the door of Levi and Matthew, and their publican associates, when they spread the feast of gratitude. He sojourned with the brother and the sisters that dwelt at Bethany. His ministry both began and ended with a social act. His first miracle was at the wedding-feast in Cana, when he changed the water into wine; and his last request was made at the paschal supper, in the upper room of a house in Jerusalem, when he expressed his wish that in after times his apostles should remember him as they passed round, according to Jewish custom, the cup of benediction. There can be no doubt of the disposition of the individual, which in this case indicates the spirit of the religion. It is a social spirit. I do not mean, by saying this, to enforce any particular degree of social communication in any particular case as a Christian duty. The gospel is not one of those levelling and artificial uniformity-creating systems, which would plane away all diversities of organisation, taste, habit, and pursuit. There is no such sameness, either in the character it forms or in the heaven it promises; for here "we have gifts differing according to the grace given unto us;" and "as one star differeth from another star in glory, so also shall it be in the resurrection of the dead." But it certainly makes no merit of systematic avoidance of our fellows; and it as certainly points to principles and feelings which would render society in the highest degree conducive to good. The ample range which it allows to our diversities, habits, or the dictates of circumstances, is evident from the contrast in the connection of the text between our Lord and the Baptist. "For John the Baptist came neither eating bread nor drinking wine; and ye say, He hath a devil (or demon). The Son of man cometh eating and drinking; and ye say, Behold

a gluttonous man, and a wine-bibber, a friend of publicans and sinners! But wisdom is justified of all her children." And folly is condemned of all *her* children, both in the seclusion of superstition, and in their mindless and heartless communication. With this latitude, then, wherein every individual must discover for himself by what arrangements of his time and pursuits, by what intermixture of society and solitude, he can best improve himself and serve others, let us apply the fact of Christ's social disposition, and the spirit of sociality, as it appears in his character and conduct, and in the New Testament generally, to the state of things now existing in our age and country. Let us see what are the prevalent failings or mistakes which interfere with reaping from social intercourse its full measure of advantage and enjoyment. The review may be useful to us in various respects, and may have a beneficial influence on individual character.

The first requisite is, that *simplicity* and *frankness* which restore speech and manner to their natural occupation of expressing the real thoughts and feelings of the individual. That "speech was given to conceal our thoughts," may be a clever maxim for the trickery of diplomacy, but little has it to do with Christian morals and manners. There is a sort of sullen pride, and of false shame, which are often represented by foreigners as our national characteristics, and, perhaps, not without some reason. We seem often to regard our opinions as a property, which is not to be dispensed lavishly, and may not be invaded with impunity. "I have a right to my opinions, and you have a right to yours, and let us both keep them to ourselves," is the language of a spirit not uncommon. This is not the way for enlightened opinion to prevail. There is no occasion to confound frankness with obtrusiveness—they have no affinity. But there is much occasion for our saying, at convenient seasons, freely and fairly, what we think. The world would be all the better for it, as to truth; and ourselves all the better, as to Christian simplicity. The attitude of defiance is misplaced here. "Know my thoughts? you could not if my heart were in your hand, and shall not while 'tis in my own possession," may be all very well as a resistance to oppressive inquisition, but is not very well as keeping up a conventional

mystification and twilight of opinion which individuals have got beyond. The great merit of many men, of whom we speak as having lived before their age, and anticipated the advance of a subsequent generation, was, after all, perhaps rather in the plain expression of their thoughts, than in those thoughts being far beyond the convictions of at least some other men of the same period. Dr. Priestley was a good example of my meaning. He broke the ice on almost every theological topic, saying out that which the speculative had only thought; and he did more by that than by any singular correctness of opinion or elevation of views. And what can be more hostile to the utility of social communication than the conventional coldness and indifference on topics of interest which many affect? There is no excellence without strong feeling. The woman who made her way into the banqueting-room where Jesus sat, to express her bursting gratitude by anointing his feet with ointment, and wiping them with her hair, committed a violation of all the conventional proprieties, which Simon the Pharisee did not fail to remark, nor Christ fail to excuse. To be without emotion, or to make a jest of emotion, is one of the worst cants and affectations. It is most injurious to character, and most hostile to the cultivation of mind and heart by social intercourse. In sacred poetry, the social expression of emotion is carried to the highest extreme, and on proportionate occasions ascribed even to inanimate nature, till the stars sing together, and the trees of the field clap their hands in unison.

One great obstacle to benefit by social intercourse is that *exclusiveness* which the priests and Scribes, the aristocracy of Judæa, were so scandalised at Christ's disregarding, by conversing occasionally and familiarly with the lower and despised classes of their community. In defiance of a nominally received doctrine, which teaches, with such extraordinary emphasis, the natural equality and identity of humanity, there is a continual effort to cut up the race into classes, to sort them out by a nomenclature of vain distinctions, and then to make them as strange as if they were inhabitants of different planets. This exclusiveness, enforced most by the highest, but mimicked almost down to the lowest, infallibly generates a narrow-mindedness

which may sometimes have fatal consequences. The first revolution in France would not have taken its nobility by surprise, had they not been grossly ignorant of the opinions, feelings, wants, sufferings, indignation, of the other classes. To know the diversities in men, which different modes of life and occupation generate, is one of the consequences of a more liberal and extended habit of communication, most useful to the mind of the observer, and, through its influence on him, to the minds of all.

Pretension is very much in the way of men's doing one another all the good they might. There are too many who delight in gathering others around them, not to give them pleasure, but to attract to themselves their observation and their admiration, though it be only for the most adventitious circumstances. These are the sort of people whom Christ advised, when they made a feast, to call in the halt, the blind, and the beggar from the way-side, and who did not take his advice. It is all over for improvement with the victim of pretension. Those whose aim is display are little likely to learn from others, and as little likely to teach others, unless it be by the absurdity and disgust of their example. He who says by implication, "I am Sir Oracle, and when I ope my lips, let no dog bark," can only meet with the sarcasm,—suppressed by the civil and the servile, uttered by the proud or the careless,—"Verily you are the man, and wisdom will die with you." Neither party can so be benefited. "Ye are brethren;" why do ye assume and domineer by the way? is a question with more rebuke implied than, "Why do ye fall out by the way?" Insolence is worse than irritability. He who seeks others, simply to show them what he himself is in talent, greatness, wealth, and splendour, is the proprietor of a sorry exhibition, as would be manifest to himself, could his sight be fairly turned inward on the reality. There doubtless are qualities which elevate their possessor above others; but one characteristic of their possession is the absence of pretension, and a disposition for the fair interchange of instruction and enjoyment.

A greater degree of *formality* and *expense* attends social intercourse in this than in many countries, which may thereby, in this particular at least, claim a higher grade in civilisation. The one rises out of the other, because it becomes no longer a simple question of doing that which to

each is, at the time, the most pleasurable. Do we not often hear of persons most qualified to enjoy and to adorn society, who yet lead lives of at least comparative seclusion, on account of the narrowness of their incomes? That narrowness is not half so much to be deplored or deprecated as the narrowness of the customs which make such a consequence result from it,—which make society one of the luxuries of affluence, instead of one of the conditions of existence. Christ's first miracle at Cana helped out the failing resources of the host, and raised them to the expectations of the guests. The spirit of his religion will work a nobler miracle when it makes the pleasure of both parties more independent on such resources.

One of the greatest drawbacks on the advantage of social intercourse, and which is the cause of some already noticed, is what I know not how to call otherwise than by the name of *intolerance*. It is that in conversation on a small scale which intolerance is on a large scale in church and state; I mean the shock, the annoyance, the opposition, the condemnation, which the expression of opinions excites when they happen to be out of the common highway of thought. We are yet, in too many circles, very far from that true freedom of speech which belongs to true freedom of thought. Can it be doubted that there is such a thing as truth on the great subjects of religion, politics, and the constitution of society? If so, can it be doubted that many minds, if independently exercised, must reach that truth alike in all the civilised and enlightened nations of the earth? Can it be doubted that free thought has every where a common tendency, but that it is kept down by the consequences which in society attend its expression? A nation may differ from a nation in its government; a church may differ from a church in its creed; but individuals may not differ from the rest without the risk of being scowled on, laughed at, shunned, or taxed with evil consequences. This is very bad, and a great bar to improvement. The middle classes in Judæa asked whether any of the rulers believed in Christ. They must have been impressed with the proofs of his pretensions, though they did not say so, before they thought of that question. Nicodemus, who was of the Sanhedrim, only came by night, and was abashed by the sneer, "Art thou also of Galilee?" Now, when one

considers how many opinions have afterwards become current in the world which at first were regarded with horror, as heretical, blasphemous, seditious, atheistical, and immoral, it might make one suspect that this is not the way in which it is wise to treat opinion at all. It might guide us to the conclusion that we should keep clear of such associations when we hear opinions expressed. We should think it a profitable study to know any convictions to which a human mind can be honestly led; *led*, I say, for all honest opinion is involuntary, and therefore not the subject of praise or blame. Nobody should be thought the worse of for any opinions, so long as they are opinions, and not affectations. Were people to leave off being shocked with one another, they would begin to understand one another, and that would be a good step towards understanding all matters on which the world has not yet arrived at knowledge and truth. I was for some years partially acquainted with one of the best books in the Unitarian controversy, but some of the criticisms shocked me; I thought them wild, far-fetched, and of a bad tendency; and so for that time I would read no more, much to my own loss. And thus it continually is with books and people. The worst of all tendencies is the tendency to suppression of thought, which is that of truth, which is that of virtue, which is that of happiness.

I shall only mention more the want of mental cultivation in individuals as an obstacle to deriving the greatest advantage from society. Those who are improving themselves most will, when they come together, most improve one another, and give most enjoyment to one another. The lowest is apt to pull every thing down to its own level: "As iron sharpeneth iron, so doth the face of man his friend;" but alas for the iron if the friend be only clay! The moral of the parable holds here: "Whosoever hath, to him shall be given, that he may have abundantly." There is a view in which individual improvement is the dictate of benevolence to society, and benefit from society the reward of personal improvement. It is the common character of real duties, which are all real interests. In enlightened society, the largest giver is unfailingly, from his very capacity, the largest receiver. It is measured back into his own bosom.

In these remarks I have noticed many things which it

is beyond the power of individuals to alter, which spring out of the manners of our age and country. Let not the remarks, therefore, be thought misplaced or profitless. I would excite no individuals to a crusade against society; but how do errors, theoretical or practical, wear out of the world, save by individual conviction, felt and expressed, and accumulating till it becomes the spirit and the power of reformation? It is something to have the eyes of the mind open to see, and the heart not heavy to understand. And if you have heedfully followed me, you will have felt that all these observations on society were one great lesson of individual duty and improvement, of personal and Christian morality. For surely he who appreciates and cherishes a frank simplicity of character, a strong sense of human brotherhood, an aversion to ostentation and pretension, rational, inexpensive tastes and habits, justice towards others' mental rights, and charity for their failings, and a constant desire and effort for improvement, both in and by solitude and society,—he who does this is in the way of growing in grace and knowledge. He is making himself more and more worthy of the name of a disciple of Christ. It is mere superstition to say that this is no part of religion. It may not be a part of that by which priests can profit; or on which to build a fame for superior sanctity; or by which to hold together a sect or faction; but it is not the less a part of religion—Christianity—on that account. It is an important part, for it enters largely into the formation of character; and that is more than can be said for many dogmatic articles of faith, for many ceremonial forms of worship. Let there be many such persons in all sects of religion, and there would soon be an end of sectarianism. Let there be many such persons in all classes of society, and there would soon be a demolition of classification. Let there be many such persons in all nations, and there would soon be an end of internal tyrannies and external aggressions. Let there be many such persons in society, and society would not be a scene of coldness, hypocrisy, affectation, and competition; but God's family of human brethren on earth. Then, is not this religion, and gospel? And may not we do ourselves good—Christian good, spiritual good—by pursuing such a train of thought? I think so. And that it will tend to make us grow up in all things into him

who is our head, even Christ,—Christ, the friend of publicans and sinners, because they had no other friend; the friend of all, in being *their* friend; because he who raises any, benefits the rest;—their friend, but not less the friend of the most enlightened and most righteous; the friend of every description of men, because he was the Friend of mankind, the Saviour of the world.

Sermon XI.—Mental Hospitality.

"Be not forgetful to entertain strangers; for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (Heb. xiii. 2).

There are precepts, and this is one, of which the incidental importance is more than the direct importance; the applicability of which, a difference of manners, customs, and circumstances has very much diminished, if not totally destroyed; which there is perhaps little occasion to dwell upon in any sense, and which in their original sense cannot or needs not now be enforced; but which yet, by the analogies they suggest, or the lessons they contain, or the principles they imply, have acquired a new interest to recommend them to our consideration. I know of no particular reason for admonishing the members of this congregation to practise hospitality to strangers. So far as my observation of their actual conduct goes, they are liable to no charge of deficiency or forgetfulness on that score; and so far as my knowledge extends of the disposition within, and the circumstances without, under whose influences they act, there is adequate motive for their doing whatever is right and useful in this particular, without invoking the aid of the more powerful sanctions of religion and morality to impel a better observance. So far as modern times need this virtue, it is a virtue of native growth in our country. England has long been the generous hostess of all earth's fugitives. Thither they came, in turn, to escape from revolutionary fury and regal vengeance. This island has long been one great temple of hospitality, the sanctuary and asylum of the oppressed. If for a time there were any exceptions to this generosity, they have all been owing to the policy of our statesmen, and not to the

feelings of our countrymen. The national heart was always right, and a right noble heart it is. The madness of continental despotism has ever elicited and illustrated the glory of British hospitality. Why then, it may be thought, put forward a precept which is doubly rendered obsolete? —obsolete, by the indigenous vigour of the disposition which it was meant to cherish, but which needs not cherishing; and obsolete, by the difference of our manners and condition, which otherwise provide for that convenience for which, in those times, private hospitality was the chief provision. And I reply that it is put forward, not on account of its direct, but of its indirect importance. It is put forward because it has acquired in one way at least as much interest as it has lost in another. And if there be little use in my preaching to you on the duty of hospitality to strangers, there may be no little use in the thoughts and feelings arising out of the fact that such a precept was so earnestly enforced on the first Hebrew believers in Christianity.

The precept is a valuable relic of antiquity, of a different state of society, of a lower degree of civilisation: it carries us far back to a ruder period; it carries us far away to Eastern regions. In the progress of society there is a stage in which hospitality to strangers is reckoned among the first of virtues, for this plain reason, that its practice is among the highest utilities or the greatest necessities. Among many Eastern tribes with their unchanging manners, and in thinly peopled countries, we find men remaining long at this stage. But for the custom of such to give food and shelter to the wayfaring man, the charities of life, and the security of life, would soon be at an end. With the multiplication of inhabitants; with the improvement of the arts; with the diffusion of the conveniences of life; with the increased facilities for travelling, and security for property, and all the multifarious arrangements of the more perfect forms of political society,—we come into a much better condition, though it may be less adapted to strike the imagination. The precept which reminds us of the contrast is a lesson of gratitude. The sceptic on this point would perhaps be satisfied by the actual comparison of a journey of any given distance in such a country as this, and among any of the semi-civilised tribes that yet occupy any

of the not semi-civilised regions on the face of the earth. In proportion as the precept ceases to be obligatory in promoting hospitality to the man whom we know not, it becomes obligatory in promoting gratitude to the God of whom we do know that he has caused our lines to fall in pleasant places, and given us a goodly heritage. The allusion of the writer in the text I take to be to some occurrences in patriarchal history. He refers to the period when oftentimes in fancy, and sometimes perhaps in fact, beings of superhuman nature wandered visibly about the earth, in the outward form of men, and sojourned in the tents of those whose virtues they were commissioned to put to the test, and to whom they became the unexpected agents of reward or punishment. So the three men, as they seemed, stood by the tent of Abraham in the plains of Mamre, in the heat of the day; and accepted the simple viands which he courteously offered, and his services, as he stood by them under the tree, when they did eat; and ere they left, gave him that gracious promise in which Israel gloried through all succeeding generations. And so the two angels came, as common travellers, to Lot at eventide, as he sat in the gate of Sodom; and he rose up to meet them; and bowed his face to the ground; and prayed them to come in to their servant's house, and tarry all night, that he might send them on their ways in the morning; and he pressed them greatly; and he spread his feast; and he protected them from insult; and they told him of the coming doom of the devoted cities, and counselled his flight, and promised him security in the destruction. And other histories are there of a similar description, showing God's superabundant blessings on man in the discharge of his duty and the exercise of generosity; and illustrating the assertion in the text, that while they only thought of kindly entertaining strangers, some had entertained angels unawares.

There is a narrow and short-sighted criticism, which, in its mistaken strivings after verbal accuracy, is apt to overlook too much the opinions and modes of thought which prevailed in Judæa, and which, because the meaning of the word "angel" is simply "messenger," would always so interpret it, to the exclusion of those notions of a superior race of beings, so denominated from their office, in which the Jews mani-

festly believed firmly and generally. According to critics of this class, we must in such a passage as the text interpret the term of human messengers, the angels—*i. e.* the messengers or ministers—of the churches, or of the gospel; a sense in which the word certainly is found, especially in the commencement of the book of Revelation. The text will then mean, that in their indiscriminate hospitality to strangers, they might sometimes unawares receive and be edified by some of the authorised messengers of the gospel; some who would well repay their kindness by the communication of useful instruction, or interesting fact; who would bring new light to their minds and fresh gladness to their hearts; who were bearing over the world's wilderness the water of the spring of life eternal; heralds charged with the proclamation of the spiritual jubilee for mankind; and whose benediction of "peace to this house" came upon it in "the fulness of the blessing of the gospel of peace." And though the coming of such guests might be "like angel visits, few and far between," yet the hope of it would animate, and the recurrence richly reward, all the efforts and duties of the hospitality of the intervening period.

Well would it have been for the Jewish nation, when Christ came to them, not in that form and with those pretensions which their minds had familiarly associated with the promised Messiah, but in a character which was, to their prejudices and hearts, that of *a stranger*, if they had entertained the consideration of his claims and doctrines, instead of at once rejecting him as an impostor. Strange as the office seemed to them in his exposition of it, that was the true exposition, as was beautifully proved by his character, as was sublimely exhibited in his works and resurrection, as was fearfully demonstrated in their judicial destruction. The lesson is a warning against what we may term mental inhospitality. It admonishes us never hastily to refuse admission to a tenet merely because it is a stranger to our previous notions. Had they received him, he would have been to them the angel of the covenant; a heavenly messenger, a celestial visitant, with a message infinitely more bright and blessed than any ever brought by winged forms, in robes of light, to the tents of patriarchs. How much is the progress of truth delayed

in the world by this summary mode of shutting the door of conviction against doctrines, because they are thought strange! When creeds have become corrupt, truth must have become strange. Paul's gospel was so, even to the Athenians, who had been all their lives luxuriating in the novelty they loved. And how little of the beauty and the power of truth can be evident on its first admission! The first Unitarians knew comparatively little of Unitarian Christianity; nor has its full lustre yet shone upon the world. How many of its bearings upon human intellect, human character, human improvement, human happiness, yet remain to be developed! What a dry and barren series of mere negations and axiomatical propositions does it still appear to many! "I am tired," said some one, "of continually hearing that there is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." And any one might well be tired, if those facts terminated in themselves; if that was the sum and substance of the matter; if they were not inexhaustibly fruitful in views of God and man, of time and eternity, which tend to exalt us to the true dignity of our nature, to enlarge our hearts and purify our hopes, to glorify God and bless humanity, to command the world and prepare for heaven. Were it only the truth, we should embrace it, however strange it might appear; but those who do not stop there, but in their understandings "give it entertainment due," find that they have entertained an angel unawares, so surpassing is its splendour, so lovely its benignity, so heart-touching its pleadings, and so heart-healing its consolations, so divine its voice, so gracious its promises, and so faithful its performance. This "strange doctrine" becomes the wisdom of God and the power of God unto salvation. The love of truth, which bore the mind on, in spite of all its original associations, to the reception of a strange and unpopular proposition, is rewarded by finding it full of spiritual life, beauty, and energy, enlightening the past, the present, and the future, God's character and plans, and man's everlasting destiny.

And the rare and happy visitations to which the text alludes, which occasionally give a superadded and unexpected blessing to those who were meekly, faithfully, and kindly going on in the path of righteousness and mercy,

are a not unapt emblem of what is very frequent in the Divine dealings. Providence often bestows something of enjoyment which is, as it were, over and above what the righteous had any reason to expect—some unpromised, unexpected, unconnected blessing. Besides the internal reward of virtue, in the testimony of a good conscience; besides the future external and obvious reward of virtue in the day of retribution, there frequently are various mercies freely given by the way, to adorn and enliven a path which has so much to render it arduous and painful. It is not only that those who entertain strangers sometimes receive angels, but those, generally, who do any thing that God commands will often be visited by incidental gleams of brightness and joy. In discharging the duty of searching the scriptures for divine truth, how many occasional and independent gratifications are there for head and heart, for the fancy and the feelings! Sometimes the discovery of an historical fact, which the antiquarian would have spent half his life well pleased to ascertain, in poring over the records of the past; sometimes a poetic beauty, so exquisite in its conception and expression, that, had it been in a classical writer, it would have been trumpeted forth as repaying years of education; sometimes a fact, or principle, of mental or moral philosophy, which would have made a sage's name and fame, and secured his place among the lights of his age and country. In fulfilling the duty of combining with others for the achievement of some public measure for public good; in that occasional union with personal strangers, that coöperation of knowledge, zeal, and benevolence by which liberty is gained for slaves, and restrictions on human rights are obliterated, and unjust laws are repealed, or just ones enacted, or religious information is diffused over the face of a country, how often has it happened that public sympathy has been the occasion of private attachment, and friendships have sprung up which have been a mutual and lasting blessing to the lives of both! When illness has caused a cessation from active pursuits, or when the heavy pressure of calamity has benumbed and crushed the mind, and recourse has been had to some new intellectual occupation, dallying with a history, a science, a language, a theory, merely, perhaps, for the purpose of

disengaging the thoughts a brief while from depressing topics, how often has not only the first purpose been answered, but the individual been led on unawares, and found unexpected sources of activity, of enjoyment, of usefulness, blessings tenfold to himself, and to others through his instrumentality! Partly, at least, we are indebted to the mental and bodily sufferings of Cowper for his poetry; and to the deafness of Dr. Lardner for the *Credibility of the Gospel History*. How often have the proper conduct of a child towards his parents, his filial respect and affection, his attention to their feelings, wants, wishes, and situation, his unwearied and lovely ministering to them in their infirmities, perhaps even their fretfulness, not only had its natural and common and sufficient recompense, but attracted notice in its unobtrusiveness, and, by the character it created in the minds of others, paved the way, even after the lapse of years, for his success in life, and raised him to a station which he might never else have attained! Sometimes an individual, accustomed to be thought for and acted for, is suddenly thrown into a lonely and difficult situation, requiring clearness of mind, promptness of decision, energy of conduct; and all the needful attributes spring up, and the new duties are strenuously discharged; and not only is the actual object gained, but by the attention, the admiration, the interest excited, some of earth's best social blessings flow in, like an unlooked-for spring shower upon fields and gardens, making the heart's wilderness to blossom as the rose. Oh, there are stray gifts of God's goodness scattered over all earth's paths of duty, and what seem weeds give forth balm and fragrance to those who tread them with wounded feet and fainting senses! While immortal fruits grow on the tree of life, its shade is the sweetest shelter; birds of paradise sing among the branches, and "its leaves are for the healing of the nations."

But while we rejoice, when they do occur to ourselves or others, in these additional encouragements, these unlooked-for grants of goodness, these "uncovenanted mercies," these incidental and superabundant demonstrations of God's grace and love, let us remember that, without them, the obligations of goodness are perfect, the rewards of goodness are most ample. Duty is to be done, whether

they come or not; and oftentimes they do not come. There may be even the apparent evil of additional and unexpected discouragements. Duty, whatever may be the present accompaniments or the immediate results, is the Christian principle. For the accessory delights, if we have them, let us thank our God, as Job did in his redoubled prosperity; but in utter destitution of them, let us still have his righteous confidence—"though he slay me, yet will I trust in him." If good report proclaim our righteous efforts, let our ears drink in, though not too fondly, the pleasant music; but through evil report, with all its harshness, discordancy, and threats, let us hold on unflinchingly. Though no angel ever came, the patriarchs yet beckoned in the fainting stranger, and welcomed him to their tent, and brought out the repast, and spread his couch. The duty had no contingency upon the miracle; nor has any duty upon coincidences, which may be beautiful and delightful, but which are not certain, are not promised. There is enough which is certain, and is promised. Heaven hereafter, and its hope here, can do their work upon the heart and life without auxiliaries. They can arm for trials, sustain under calamities; and if the world be never friendly, why, they will overcome the world. This is the true Christian spirit. It will go towards the heavenly city of its final abode and destination, as, at their great and appointed festivals, the Jews of old went towards Jerusalem. The command was to go—and they went. They went, whatever might be the length of the way or the state of the country. They rejoiced in going, if their procession moved on in peace, heaven above smiling on the loveliness of earth beneath, each village greeting them, and the husbandman leaving his plough, and the artisan his work, to join their band, and the winds wafting along the burden of the psalms they chanted, and the hills prolonging it with their echoes, till before them rose the temple, circled by Zion, the city of their God. But if storms howled above, and dreariness spread around, and terror had depopulated the villages, and hostile armies were in the way, and ever and anon the battle-cry was heard, and they moved with the bow strung and the sword unsheathed, still they went—went through tempest and conflict to Jerusalem. And thus goes on in the path of

duty the real Christian. Or, even worse than this; be he alone, like Paul, bound on that same journey: some entreated him with tears; some prophesied menacing evils; friends beseeched; foes threatened; bonds and afflictions awaited him: but he went; and for his firm and faithful discharge of duty through perils, imprisonments, endurances of every varying character of gloom, and ultimate martyrdom, resplendent is his crown of glory in Christ's heavenly kingdom. Earthly good should ever be regarded as comparatively accidental; fidelity to God and conscience is the great essential. Our great Master and Saviour bends from his throne above to behold its struggles; and we hear his word of promise, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life."

Sermon XII.—Rejoice evermore.

"Rejoice evermore" (1 Thess. v. 16).

A state of feeling cannot be produced or changed by mere volition. A man cannot rejoice or grieve by an act of the will, in obedience to a command. He can only do one of two things: adopt the outward expressions and manifestations, so far as they are capable of being voluntarily assumed; or employ such means as are subject to his control for the purpose of generating in his mind the state of feeling which is enjoined upon him. One of these courses must therefore be considered as enjoined by precepts like that just read. I should rather say the latter course must be intended; for so far as the first is not hypocrisy—to which extent it could not be recommended by the apostle—so far as it consists, for instance, of adopting when in sorrow, or having recourse to, those holy compositions expressive of the care, condescension, and love of our heavenly Father, which tend to bring the mind into a calmer state, it may be resolved into the last; and is the employment of one species of means for generating the desired feeling. This, then, is the mode in which all precepts like the text—precepts which command, not a voluntary action, but a state of feeling—are to be interpreted and observed. They are an abbreviated form of

enjoining all the proper voluntary means, which are not specified, for the production of the end, which is specified.

Could the text be obeyed by an immediate act of the will, who would not obey it? who would not be always rejoicing if he could? In this view, such injunctions are altogether nugatory; but in the other view, as commanding a certain set of voluntary actions, they are not nugatory, they are practical and important; and the only question is, as to what means the apostle had in view, or Christianity contemplates, as those which, being employed, will realise the end here so briefly and imperatively indicated. These I shall endeavour to specify, *i.e.* I shall endeavour to show by what voluntary acts the Christian may expect to advance towards a permanent state of cheerful or joyous feeling.

1st. *Habitual piety.* The very occupation of prayer tends to calm the mental agitation, to soothe dejection and sorrow, to mitigate even the sense of bodily pain, and to steady the soul amid the tumultuousness of unexpected delight. As in a strong consciousness of the Divine presence all the distinctions among men vanish, the mighty and the lowly appear on an equality, and even all created beings seem, by the effect of that overshadowing immensity, on the same level; so do events in like manner lose their disparities of magnitude and diversities of colouring, and take the one form and colour imparted to all by the consideration that they are His will, and ordained in love. The very next precept to the text which the apostle gives is, "Pray without ceasing." Prayer makes us feel the Divine presence; the presence of a heavenly Father, and an Almighty friend. That presence must be consolation, strength, and joy. He who "prays without ceasing" will "rejoice evermore." Habitual devotion, if Christian in its principles and spirit, tends to habitual cheerfulness. It does this even in the form of supplication. But Christian devotion does not more consist in prayer than in praise; nor so much. When the heart of the thoughtless or hardened transgressor is first touched with penitence, supplication may and must predominate, almost to the exclusion of thanksgiving. But as the spirit of the gospel advances in its sway over his spirit, the pro-

portion will change. His devotion will have in it comparatively more of gratitude and praise. From "Pray without ceasing," the apostle immediately advances to the injunction, "In every thing give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you." And this alteration in the proportion will go on with the progress of his soul, till the one is absorbed in the other altogether. The one is the language of fear, the other of love; and when love has grown to perfection, it will cast out fear. The tendency of devotion is to one single sentence, "Thy will be done;" and to that, first submissively, and then rejoicingly. And if this require the largely extended knowledge, the perfect holiness, and the thoroughly harmonised feelings which the soul can only arrive at in the world to come, which world will therefore be one of joy for evermore, the cultivation of the devout habit here will yet, in its measure and proportion, be that of felicity also; and the permanently realised presence of God will be the permanently realised possession of a peaceful and rejoicing mind.

2d. *Habitual activity.* This is also indicated by exhortations in the immediate connection of the text. Paul tells the Thessalonians to prove all things; to esteem those who laboured among them; and themselves to warn the unruly, comfort the feeble-minded, support the weak, and ever to follow that which is good, among themselves, and to all men. And these are good introductions and accompaniments to rejoicing evermore. There is a natural incongruity between rational and useful occupations, and mental depression, fretfulness, and wretchedness. The garments and the treasures that moth and rust corrode are not those which are in daily use, but those which are hoarded up, away from heaven's free air and man's employment and benefit. It is in the stagnation of thought and feeling that unwholesome fancies come over them, as on the surface of a pool, unsightly and poisonous. Let the free current flow, and by that free flowing it will purify and brighten in the no longer intercepted sunbeam, and make sweet music in its course. Activity, honourable and useful activity, is the mind's proper condition, to depart from which outrages nature, which can never be outraged with impunity; and whose penalty in this case is a restless, dissatisfied, and troubled spirit. There is a moral

lesson as well as a grammatical truth in distinguishing between words which signify doing and those which betoken suffering. The very *energy of endurance,* in sickness or other calamity, is an active principle, an intense and powerful one; bearing on to its object, it may be slowly, noiselessly, and imperceptibly, but uniformly and irresistibly. It makes every faculty and every feeling and every principle do its duty, without parade, but without cessation; and so the deepest despondency becomes confidence, and confidence generates a hope, in whose fulfilment, if not here, yet hereafter, the soul will rejoice evermore.

3d. *Consistency in our expectations.* A large proportion of our suffering arises from disappointment; and a large proportion of our disappointment arises from a faulty miscalculation, from expectations which were unreasonable. A just anticipation, an enlightened foresight, is one of the elements of the state of mind which the apostle contemplated; and this also we find in the chapter from which the text is taken; which contains, indeed, incidentally or by implication, the whole theory of our present subject. Judgments and calamities were approaching, on which unbelievers did not, but believers did, calculate. "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night. For when they shall say, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child: and they shall not escape. But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief." To be overwhelmed, prostrated, stunned, and crushed, by altogether unanticipated and unmitigated evil, may indeed happen to the most provident-minded man; but it is, to such, of the same comparative rarity as the eruption of a volcano, or the shock of an earthquake, in the material globe. In the course of nature, the succession of events, the conduct of others, a prudent man will not build upon chances. He will, so far as it is practicable, leave nothing contingent, either as to his outward circumstances, or even as to his inward feelings, upon lucky accidents. He will reckon upon the bursting of the storm from the time that he sees the clouds begin their gathering. If Paul had much communication with Demas, so as to understand his character, it must have been without surprise, and with a grief of

which the bitterness was almost destroyed by previous anticipation, that he wrote, "Demas hath forsaken me." His reliance on Demas would have gone before the trial came. If Pilate had rightly calculated on the turbulence, the meanness, the malignity, of the Jewish priesthood, he would not have had the innocent blood of Christ upon his conscience, in addition to his other vain attempts so to propitiate them as ultimately to escape having his conduct impeached and exposed by them at the imperial court. If Peter had only made a rational estimate of what was likely to happen to him when he followed Christ to the place of trial, he would either not have gone at all, or have gone with his mind prepared and forearmed, and not have been surprised into the guilt of a perjured desertion, or have been plunged into the agonies of remorse. Paul, Pilate, Peter, might have known beforehand what was likely to happen in their several circumstances. There is no comparison between a calamity—at least generally, some kinds of calamity may be exceptions—which takes us by surprise, and one of which the idea has entered the imagination, of which the probability has been investigated and ascertained by the intellect, and to which, therefore, the feelings have been accommodated before its actual arrival. This is what the apostle calls being "children of light and of the day;" not sleeping as did others, but watching and being sober. And thus was it in the matter to which he particularly referred, the coming destruction of Jerusalem. To the unbelieving Jews it was the very madness of misery; to the Christian Jews it was the fulfilment of a long and certain expectation, which they had looked at on every side and in all its bearings; by whom, therefore, most of its evils were avoided; on whom the inevitable portion of them fell with comparative lightness; and to whom there had gradually arisen associations with it of good, of hope, and of glory, that would naturally obtain at length in their minds a gladdening predominance. A just estimate of human character; a close observation of the ordinary course of providential events; the habit of investigating causes and effects in the moral world, the world of thought, feeling, and action; and a knowledge of our minds and hearts,—these will raise a man above many, though not all, of the disappointments that most embitter

life; and by leading him to feed his heart only upon expectations which are likely to be realised, will do very much towards making him rejoice evermore.

4th. *Command of the passions* is an essential ingredient in this cup of joy.

The etymological meaning of the word passion is suffering; in which sense our Lord's agony in the garden is called the passion of Christ. There is often much confusion in the use of this word, but for our present purpose the primary meaning of it is sufficient. It characterises passion as something not properly belonging to us, but wrought upon us, doing us violence, by external agency. In this, passion is distinguished from affection, which is something wrought into our moral being, and thus becoming a permanent condition of our existence, and an active principle in our constitution. Passion and affection are relative terms, which should ever be applied with reference to the other qualities of individuals; the strength of emotion which in one person is passion, because in him it can only be produced by powerful external excitement, and is then too violent to be continuous, in another may rather require the epithet of affection, because the ampler development of his faculties, and the firmer construction of his entire character, enable him not only to bear it with impunity, but to prolong its duration with enjoyment and advantage. Permanent passion must either destroy the individual, or be fitlier called affection, according to the development in that individual of the intellectual and active powers and of the moral principles. By an impassioned character we often mean a character of strong feeling; but while the feeling is only strong in proportion to what others feel, and not in proportion to the general capacities of the character itself, this involves none of the evils of unregulated passion. It has been said of such, that their affections are passions; we should rather say, that their passions are affections. The affections are ministers of happiness, but passion is affection run riot. The most pleasurable emotions and feelings, when wrought up to that sudden violence which constitutes them passions, become painful. The paroxysm of joy has often been the agony of death. The darker passions—hatred, avarice, licentiousness, ambition—are totally and obviously inconsistent with a state of uniform

enjoyment. They are the intense cravings after supposed gratification, which, when attained, only leaves disappointment, bitterness, remorse. Look at the effect of unrestrained passion carried into any of the particulars which have been enumerated as conditions of the blessing in the text. Devotion is transformed by passion into an agency of suffering; its character becomes enthusiastic and superstitious; it is debased by the alloy of earthly emotions; its even and heart-gladdening course is changed for an alternation of frantic fervours and dark despondency. The activity of passion is like the strength of madness—preternatural, misdirected, intermitting, followed by exhaustion, and full of mischief. The hopes of uncorrected passion, gorgeous in its own colouring, are sure to end in disappointment. Its expectations are of all the most inconsistent and unreasonable. Happiness is not in sudden and strong sensations, violent emotions, fearful bursts of feeling, even though these sensations, emotions, feelings, may have in them no character of guilt, and even though their occasional occurrence may be coveted; they must still, though they should be momentarily blissful, be the rare miracles of life, not its daily successions of cause and effect. They may be things to meet with and remember, not to be provided for. The heart, like the household, should be set in order. It is only by the regular workings of the intellect and feelings that there can be a constant and pervading sense of joy. Pure, lasting, well-directed affections are the sunshine of our path, which, if they do not burst upon us like the lightning, do not vanish like it either; and if they have not its glare and glory, have not either the prompt revulsion of the darkness by which it is followed. We are wisely, therefore, admonished in this chapter, that we should "be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation."

5th. *Habitual obedience to the dictates of conscience;* or, according to the apostolic directions which follow the text, holding fast that which is good, abstaining from even the appearance of evil, and preserving spirit and soul and body blameless unto the coming of Christ.

What I call a good conscience is the accordance of our own conduct with our own rule of right. Without this there can be no self-respect; and he who forfeits that has

made a lamentable shipwreck. There is no rejoicing evermore for conscious degradation. When men wander from the standard of duty in search of happiness, they wander from happiness also, under the influence of self-delusion. The shortest and surest, indeed often the only, way to joy the most elevated and enduring, is through that which is immediately painful. He mistakes who thinks to gain that object by hardening his heart and deadening his sympathies. Selfish joy is low in its nature and brief in its duration. To enter with an acute sympathy into the sorrows of others; to weep with those that weep, as well as to rejoice with those that rejoice; to show the victims of unkindness, of misfortune, of oppression, and of all the various ills that flesh is heir to, that we have not only a mind to plan and a hand to execute, but also a heart to feel for their calamities,—this, though it be sometimes agonising, is man's preparation for solid happiness, for it is that for which his Maker constituted him as he is, and placed him where he is. Its painfulness works out a pleasure beyond what cold selfishness, in its most successful avoidance of even the sight of misery, can ever attain. All habits or objects which may seem or be conducive to personal gratification should be brought to this test. Whatever will not abide it belongs not to the means of happiness—it will not endure.

6th. *A mind which cherishes expanded and expanding views of God's dealings with his creatures*—a soul which, in Paul's language, is a child of light and of the day, not of night or darkness—is the final requisite. The more we understand of the Divine government, the more shall we be impressed with its wisdom and benignity, the more shall we rejoice that "the Lord reigneth." The clearer our mental vision, and the wider our mental horizon, the larger prospect shall we have of gladness and of glory. Intelligence must be an agency of happiness when, in all its diversified pursuits and operations, it is only doing one thing, which is "to understand the loving-kindness of the Lord." As these religious views possess themselves of the soul, the gloom and pain excited by what is temporary become evanescent in the lustre of the good which alone is eternal, and which shall be universal. If men would but exercise their minds upon the great plan of Providence, learning more and

more of the principles on which it proceeds, the ways in which it works, the end to which it advances, how much of unhappiness, of disappointment, of despondency, would be precluded! There is nothing so practically beneficial, such a spring of hourly pleasure to the heart, as the growing enlightenment of the mind on the nature and tendency of the Divine dispensations. Indolent ignorance is punished by the needless suffering occasioned by its own narrow notions. It is eminently true of religious "knowledge," that it is "power"—power which purifies, and power which blesses. Evermore to see God in his works, to know what he does, and why he does it, is evermore to rejoice. And if this be far beyond our attainment here, as to the particular workings of the mighty machine, we yet may grasp the principle, cultivate an increasing sense of its truth and beauty, and an increasing acquaintance with its applications, and thus approximate towards our final state of perfect knowledge and perfect enjoyment.

The means we have described were those which Paul and his fellow-apostles and disciples employed; and by which they succeeded, in spite of the most formidable array of external circumstances against them. They were men of prayer, habitual and fervent. Their activity was ceaseless. When Christ commissioned them, it was as if he had made "the winds his messengers, and flames of fire his ministers." They went forth into all the earth, and made the gospel proclamation universal as the shining of the stars of heaven, for there was "no speech nor language where their voice was not heard." No vain expectation buoyed them up, to plunge them afterwards in misery; they laid their account with toil, opposition, calumny, persecution, exile, chains, and death. Every passion and every thought they compelled into subjection to Christ. They knew nothing but him, the crucified one. To live in all good conscience towards God and man was that for which they exercised themselves. And they ever studied to know more of the unsearchable riches of God in Christ. They laid the foundation of principles, and then went on, and exhorted others to go on, towards perfection. And with all their toils and all their persecutions, they were happy men. Through all the painful records of the historical parts of the New Testament, and through all the arguments

and controversies of its epistles, there runs a spirit of calm rejoicing. They brought themselves even to "glory in tribulation," and the sorrow of the Christian is a "sorrow not without hope." They could do all things, through the gospel of Christ which strengthened them; and in whatever external state they were, they learned therewith to be content. When the first martyr was borne away to death, his face was as the face of an angel. They sang their hymns of praise in prisons, they rejoiced in being thought worthy to suffer. The power of evil could go no farther against them—the baffled world, in its fury to work their woe, only saw them rejoicing more and evermore.

Thus, then, not in undevout, irrational, animal pleasure; not in indolent repose; not in vain and fallacious reverie; not in tumultuous and unbridled passions; not in the sacrifice of right feeling and right conduct; not in careless, superstitious, or slothful ignorance,—but by a mind enlightened with God's truth, and observant of God's ways; a conscience void of offence; a hope pointing heavenwards, and making not ashamed; feelings well cultivated and well directed; and love to God and man, showing itself in filial piety and active goodness,—may we aim at, and, as far as earth's clouds and changes and our own infirmities will allow, advance towards, a state of conformity with the precept to rejoice evermore.

Sermon XIII.—Moral Incongruities.

"As he that taketh away a garment in cold weather, and as vinegar upon nitre, so is he that singeth songs to a heavy heart" (Prov. xxv. 20).

By these two similitudes, the proverb describes that aggravation of the suffering of an individual which is often occasioned by selfishness, or by mere heedlessness, or even by kindness, when tact and judgment are wanting in its manifestations. The first of them needs no explanation; and of the second, it may suffice to say that the substance called nitre was not that which the word designates with us, but an alkali, used in washing,—"wash me with nitre, and I shall be clean;" the same thing as the Smyrna soap-earth; and pouring vinegar upon it would make it bubble,

and effervesce, in a manner affording no unapt comparison for a state of annoyance and irritation. Such is his work who pours gay ditties in a sorrowing ear. It implies a want of thought, of judgment, or of feeling; a deplorable want of thought if, when we are with persons in a state of suffering, we do not advert to the effect which our own behaviour may have upon them; a want of judgment, if we expect to change that state by showing a total absence of sympathy in it, or if we exhort them, as by an act of volition, to spring abruptly from grief to gladness, while gloom is pressing heavily upon their minds; and a want of feeling, if our own merriment be unrepressed by a sense of the painful contrast it must present to them, of its utter uncongeniality with their condition, and by all the other stirrings within the bosom of that disposition which impels to weep with them that weep, as well as to rejoice with them that rejoice.

When this evil arises from a want of feeling, it is only one symptom of a great moral disease which requires the concentrated and persevering attention of the individual for its correction. The man who is deficient in this has a most important part of his nature undeveloped. He has to acquire some of the first principles of goodness. He *must* acquire them before he can ascend in the scale of moral excellence. The descriptions which one sometimes hears of very good people, but with not much feeling, —of cold and crabbed Christians,—are altogether incongruous and absurd. In religion and morality, the faculties of the head and the heart are coördinate; they should both be diligently cultivated, and their growth and expansion should be proportionate. The men who have done great things in the world, who have raised large classes of their fellow-creatures from suffering and degradation, who have abolished miseries; the moral heroes who have slain the monsters that ravaged cities, and made earth a wilderness,—while they have been distinguished from others by the clearness of their intellect, and the activity of their lives, have been not less elevated above them by the fervour of their feelings. They were men whose imaginations realised the peculiar kind of suffering which it was their destiny to remove or alleviate, with more than the sculptor's distinctness of form, with more than the painter's

vividness of colouring, with more than the poet's abundance of associated recollections and emotions. Such men as Howard and Clarkson had visions of the agonies of slaves and prisoners which haunted their imaginations, which tortured their sympathies, which quickened their minds to almost preternatural acuteness, which drove them forth to the work allotted them by Providence, saying, after their Master, "I have a baptism wherewith to be baptised, and how am I straitened until it be accomplished!" And what is true of those distinguished individuals holds also of circumstances less peculiar, and of characters less conspicuous.

An imagination accustomed strongly to realise the good and evil of others is as essential to virtue as an intellect stored with sound principles, and active powers in their best state for exertion. There is a physical provision for sympathy in the human constitution, as well as the material apparatus for thought and for motion. Like them, it should be employed, and cultivated, and refined, and exalted. With that, and with them, "that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural, and afterwards that which is spiritual." But in all, the one grows out of the other; and the seed intimates what the harvest will be, when man shall attain the full perfection of his nature.

Where the evil mentioned in the text is only the want of thought, of attention, of reflection, it has a speedier remedy. To see the uncongeniality is often to remove it. Joy needs a response as well as grief; and is checked by the absence of sympathy which aggravates the other. Those who are compelled to say, "We have piped to you, and ye have not danced—we have mourned to you, and ye have not wept," will sooner leave off piping than leave off mourning. The song must lighten the heavy heart or become itself a dirge. There would be a way of stilling the acclamations of a multitude—even while shouting over the victory which had driven the enemy from their gates, and saved their city from storm and pillage—the rude, untutored multitude, in all the intoxication of their triumph and the blaze of their illuminations: let but the mourners pass by, whose dearest ones have fallen in the fight, and left them desolate amid the common joy, and hushed voices, subdued looks, and even answering tears, will ac-

knowledge their presence, and do homage to their sorrows. Some one wrote a book in illustration of the harmonies of nature—and nature is abundant in harmonies, and intolerant of incongruities; nor, unless perverted and corrupted by the grossest selfishness, will man's moral nature endure the incongruity of manifest pleasure in the presence of anguish.

And the pain with which one witnesses any thing of this kind extends not only to the particular instance mentioned in the text, but to a variety of other cases, of which I shall specify some, coming under the same general description of an incongruity between the feelings of the individual, and the relative position in which he stands towards others.

And the first instance which naturally occurs is the incongruity which there is reason to apprehend exists too frequently between the thoughts and emotions which occupy individuals in a place of worship, and those which alone accord with the purposes for which we here assemble.

To come here—here, where God, the infinite and omniscient Spirit, should have his presence peculiarly felt by the reference of all that passes to his will and service; here, where in supplication and praise we invoke his hallowed name, and profess directly to address ourselves to the eternal Majesty of heaven and earth; here, where transgression is confessed, and weakness is acknowledged, and pardon is sought, and strength is supplicated, and mercies are sung in hymns of thanksgiving, and desires and hopes are breathed forth from the heart's fulness; here, where we read that pure, and powerful, and varied, and everlasting word of God, that living word, by which our Father speaks to his children in their difficulties and their temptations, their sorrows and their exertions, with all a Father's wisdom and love; here, where, though we have this treasure in earthen vessels—the excellence being in itself and its Author, and only obscured by the imperfect ministration which presents it to you—yet that ministration relates to highest and holiest truth, to the soul, and goodness, and God, and immortal being, and heavenly happiness; here, where the young come that they may be prepared for life, and the aged that they may be prepared for death, and the teachable that they may be taught, and the sorrowful that

they may be comforted, and the rich and the poor meet together in the equality of humanity, to cherish the love of brotherhood;—to come here, in a spirit of levity, or of indifference, or out of mere form and habit, or regarding it as a sort of sober amusement, or to be making a censorious application to others—oh, this is worse than pouring vinegar upon nitre, or singing songs to a heavy heart! If there be such, let the thought of what is passing in others' minds, in the penitent, the mourning, the inquiring, the devout, shame your own into seriousness and contrition. At least, let your souls here recognise His presence who is always present. It can be only required for you to perceive and feel the incongruity of your feelings, for them to change to a more becoming character. Think of this discrepancy. Think of all that should occupy your minds and hearts. The hopes of heaven, the duties of earth, the relations of humanity, will then rise upon your imaginations; your emotions will have a growing accordance with the occupations and objects of the place and time; you will worship, you will learn, you will love; you will feel the holy pleasure, and reap the spiritual profit, the experience of which makes us glad when they say, "Come, let us go up to the house of the Lord." You will say, "Truly, God is here, and I knew it not; this is none other than the house of God, this is the gate of heaven."

Another case of this incongruity, and which is very like singing songs to heavy hearts, is that of young persons who neglect that improvement of the opportunities of youth, which should form their minds and characters for future respectability, worth, usefulness, and comfort; and by giving themselves up to idleness, pleasure, and frivolity, grieve their relatives, friends, and all who are interested either in them personally or generally in the well-being of the rising generation, and through that of the generations that are to follow after, and carry on or retard the progress of the human race.

I am no advocate for a premature gravity. I do not want to see the young affecting the manners of the aged, or of the mature. I only want them to remember, and that to good purpose, that they will arrive at maturity, and, should Providence spare them, to age; and that autumn brings no harvest for him who in spring time has only

frolicked in the sunshine, played with the blossoms, and sung with the birds. Youth is the season of pleasure and hope—and be it so; but the pleasure ought not to be altogether unworthy of a being of rationality, nor the hope to stop infinitely short of the prospects of an heir of immortality. How is it that there are so many, who, as they advance in life, do not advance in moral worth, in useful influence, or even in personal enjoyment? There should be, and there might be, an harmonious progress. The improvability of a character throughout the whole of our mortal being depends materially upon what is done at that critical time when the boy passes into the man. He then opens or seals up the fountains whose ever-flowing and expanding streams should refresh him through all the wildernesses of life. He has then opportunities for acquiring knowledge, and for framing his faculties to habits of activity, which will never occur again. It is sad to think of him as so trifling away that period, that his resources will be ever diminishing; that if he shall possess wealth, it will only minister to animal indulgences, or the gratification of vanity; that if his situation shall confer influence, that influence will have no enlightened and beneficent aim; that the faculty of constant improvement, the dearest blessing of the highest minds, will in him have become defunct; that years hence he will only be living in the worthless present; that the intellect of the age will pass him by; that when he is old, there will be nothing in him for which the young, who shall then be, will seek his society, and treasure his sayings, and crave his guidance, and desire his approbation, and do him reverence in their hearts. Look forward, look forward, youth of this congregation; and redeem some time to prepare for coming time, for a coming eternity! Train your intellects to diligent exercise and useful acquisition, and your feelings to devotional acts and kindly charities; read, study, reflect, contemplate the end for which God created you, and determine on its realisation. This is to have your feelings in harmony with your age and circumstances. On you depend the destinies of the next generation. Why is the mighty, the immeasurable power of early education of so little avail in the world? To what might not children be trained? To what purity, independence, energy, and loftiness of thought and pur-

pose! Why are they not? Because those who should train them are inefficient. The teachers, the first and natural teachers, are themselves untaught. The father learned Latin at school, which is forgotten in his business; and the mother accomplishments, which are obsolete in the household. The future parents should be prepared to be the formers of their children's minds and hearts to the ardent love and active pursuit of truth and goodness; and when they delegate the task, should know what to require of the professional instructor. Only then will education become a rational and Christian training for duty, excellence, and happiness; and not the flimsy work of vanity, fashion, and worldliness that it now too often is. There are too many of the young who make one's heart heavy for futurity. Happily there are others. And when I see a youth who, even in his boyhood, discerns between the solid and the conventional in the instruction offered him, and applies most vigorously to the former; who passes with ease and grace from the temporary equality of rank in school to his own perhaps humbler position in the diversities yet kept up in actual life; who learns, in principle and not in spite, that honest industry is ever honourable, and that well to fill a useful situation is the noblest of all nobility; who diligently avails himself of every opportunity for enlarging his mind and his knowledge, and even cultivating his taste, neglecting nothing which God has given him for good, and life yields of pure enjoyment; whom it is a pleasure to preach to, because he is bent on comprehending and judging the principle, the aim, the tendency of a discourse, and appreciates and feels the harmonious influence of a religious service, and does not merely listen to pick up a few isolated sentences, to hear some few truisms repeated, which he calls religious knowledge, and to sit in complacent judgment on what he is too indolent to analyse; who is ever grateful for advantage, and on the alert for improvement, and interested in all that ought to interest the man, the citizen, and the Christian,—I see one whose feelings accord now with his position and relations; and will accord with them hereafter, when they shall have expanded and elevated themselves; with whom youth is a preparation for manhood, and life a preparation for immortality, and this world a preparation for the eternal king-

dom of God in heaven. May the portrait have many originals! Those who best deserve it, now and ever, think themselves, "not already to have attained, neither to be already perfect, but leaving the things which are behind, press onward to those which are before."

Again: I remark this incongruity of feeling in those whose situations are so far raised as to entitle them to be classed amongst, at least, the comparatively affluent and influential members of society, but who do not turn this power to the benevolent account which Christianity demands of those intrusted with such a stewardship. It is too often the case, and it is especially the prevailing mistake, or rather vice, of this country, that a man so circumstanced feels himself a member of a class or order. His sympathies are drawn towards those who have like or greater advantages, and alienated from those who are destitute of them. Towards them he displays either a supercilious compassion or a timorous apprehensiveness. He seems to regard the rich and the poor as natural enemies; and the poor as ever ready to plunder the rich, unless they can keep them down. Now I do not mean to represent this as altogether chimerical. Till the many have more education, generating in them higher moral principle, and their condition be one of much more enjoyment, there will be something of this to be apprehended by the few in whose hands the advantages of society are accumulated. But then, where is the cure? Where, but in those who are better off feeling in the way which their position requires of them? Instead of an unintellectual and indolent enjoyment of their superiority, they should never rest till the whole mass is raised as near the same level as it can be raised. There is nothing impracticable or ridiculous in universal education. There is no reason why the producers of wealth should not share more largely in the distribution of wealth. The majority must be the base of the social pyramid; but there is no reason why its foundations should be laid in ignorance and wretchedness. The feeling which accords, in the harmony of the universe, with the condition of the rich, the enlightened, the good, is to better the state of the poor, the ignorant, and the vicious. It is the work which God has given them to do; which Christianity commands, to which sympathy impels. What a

happy world this might be made, if the immense resources in it for human enjoyment were but wisely directed to common advantage, instead of being perverted to the ministry of exclusive claims and gratifications! How can men sing their songs amid so many heavy hearts? May God excite that clear conviction and strong desire of what society ought to do for all its children, which shall realise the ends of social existence, and leave not even its lowest members to the want, ignorance, privations, and abandonment of almost savage life!

Through many more illustrations might this subject be pursued. One I must just mention. By the corruptions of men, the gospel itself, that noblest strain of "Glory to God in the highest, peace on earth, and good will towards men," has been made an uncongenial and insulting song of exclusive privilege, making sad those whom the Lord hath not made sad. Religion has been put in the position which the proverb condemns. Foul perversion of "the glad tidings of great joy to all people"! It has been like one "taking away a garment in cold weather;" robbing men even of the hopes and consolations of natural religion, and representing millions of them as having perished in exposure to a storm of divine wrath and reprobation from which there was for them no shelter. It has "poured vinegar upon nitre," and made the doctrine that should purify the heart and life a noisy and profitless ebullition of bigoted hearts and clamorous tongues. It has sung of elective love, and exclusive heaven, to the heavy, because humble-hearted, who dared not appropriate the confident boasts of spiritual presumption. The tree is known by its fruits. "The wisdom which cometh from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be entreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy."

When sympathy has erred and aggravated sorrow by touching a note of uncongenial lightness, it will soon rectify the mistake, and atone for it by modulations which will charm the soul from its sadness, as the demon of Saul felt the power of the harp of David. The expression thus viewed becomes a description of beneficent power. Accordingly it is a metaphor which in some cases has been actually and commonly employed, and in others may be, to designate the

influences by which the good and great have blessed their fellow-creatures; whether by divine inspiration, or only the inspiration, which is also divine, of genius or of benevolence. The first civilisers of mankind are fabled to have been musicians. Their instrument was the human heart, their harmonies were those of human affections. By these they built up savage men into the living temple of social order. Thus was it that wild beasts grew tame at the lute of Orpheus, and the ponderous rocks became instinct with voluntary movement, till there arose the walls, and towers, and streets, and palaces of mighty cities. The Jewish prophets sang their songs to heavy hearts by the waters of Babylon; mournful was the accompaniment of those harps which hung on the willows of the Euphrates; but the dejected spirit of Israel at length revived; there was hope in the captivity; and to that Jerusalem, which they vowed never to forget, the exiles at length returned, and built again the temple of the Lord. To the sick, the maimed, the blind, the perishing, in all their heavy sadness, how like a strain of music on the ear must have come the voice of Christ, with tenderness to touch, with sympathy to win confidence, with animation to enliven. "Be of good cheer, thy sins are forgiven thee; rise up and walk." "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." And so came the words of his apostles to the bewildered inquirer, "feeling after God, if haply he might find him;" to the burdened ceremonialist, working out a righteousness by the ritual law with heartless toil; to the desponding sinner, and to the slave of the dread of death. Christian joys and hopes came to them tempered by the human sympathy of those ministers of reconciliation, and adapted themselves to each particular case, showing that, while the heart knew its own bitterness, the gospel, or its Author rather, knew it too, and had provided for it that precious gift of spiritual healing. And so works the gospel now, by him who in its spirit would console, on him who in his calamity needs that consolation. It commences a change of feeling by sympathy in the feeling which is to be changed; and the unison thus established holds on till the strain becomes one of resignation, peace, and hope. And if we love mankind, and if we realise the accumulated and complicated mass of misery which there is in the world, and, on the other hand, the

capability of that world to generate happiness, and of man to enjoy it,—our hearts must often be heavy within us at that sad contrast. But then hope singeth her songs of futurity, which philosophy has learned of experience, and prophecy shadowed forth by inspiration, and Providence will accomplish in the latter days. We listen, and our hearts are lightened. We are strengthened to go on sowing the good seed, of which future times shall reap the fruit. We may be prophesying in sackcloth; but we remain faithful witnesses for God, truth, and Providence, and bear our testimony.

Oh, happy are they, the dead that died in the Lord, and who live in heaven; to whom the ways of God are no longer mysterious; who, in the light of his presence, see "the end from the beginning," unobstructed by the intervening clouds that darken our lower path. Could their songs of unmingled delight burst upon our mortal ears, they might jar our heavy hearts. In the depressions and bewilderments, the anxieties and despondings, of our earthly life, that clear strain of joy would be uncongenial and incongruous. But we hear it not *till death*, and then increasing knowledge of the works and ways of God will soon win for it the full accordance of our immortal sympathies. Then we too shall sing "the song of Moses and the Lamb, saying, Great and marvellous are thy works, Lord God Almighty; just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name? For thou only art holy; for all nations shall come and worship before thee; for thy judgments are made manifest." And from all that exists shall we hear the glad response to our own hearts' eternal song of praise and thanksgiving.

Sermon XIV.—Elevation of Sentiment.

"If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God" (Coloss. iii. 1).

With a mixture, which is not uncommon in the most celebrated writers, of the literal and the figurative, the apostle here enforces on Christians that they should cultivate an habitual elevation of sentiment as a consequence of that moral resurrection from the death of trespasses and

sins which had been wrought in them by knowledge of the fact of Christ's resurrection from the grave. The allusive or figurative, and the literal expressions, are equally appropriate and intelligible; and there is a harmony in this intermingling and seeming confusion which not unaptly applies to the subject. The material and the mental, the natural and the supernatural, do admirably mingle in the plans of God, and the influences of religion, and the manifold operations by which man is trained into a meetness for the inheritance of the saints in light. One continually grows out of another, or acts by another; and they all "work together for good." They have a common ultimate object,—the happiness of man in the full development and infinite progressiveness of his nature. For this, his bodily frame has its peculiar construction. The physical powers of other animals cannot build up intelligence in them as do the eye, ear, hand, nerves, and brain in man. These have the same purpose and tendency as the wisdom of philosophers and the oracles of inspiration, the miracles of Moses and of Christ. A miracle is a stimulus to reason, and a suggestion of natural truth. The ascertaining of a principle in metaphysical science is sometimes, as in the theory of causation, the clearing up of a doctrine of revelation. The regions of knowledge, like the kingdoms of the earth, however distant may seem their territories, have a continual interchange going on of their productions, and in various modes are made subservient to a common object. Each seems to become, in its results, universal and infinite; and the character of each is that of all, and of their countless combinations. The revival of Christ is a bare physical fact. A certain portion of organised matter passed out of one state into another state. Yet when should we come to an end of enumerating the influences of that fact? It is the keystone of Jewish history. It binds together into a whole the extraordinary narrative which begins with the call of Abraham or the mission of Moses, and ends with the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews. To both events, and to all that intervene, it gives meaning and unity. That bare physical fact illustrates the character and designs of the pure and infinite Spirit. It reveals God as the Almighty and the All-loving. Look at it in its effect on the speculations of philosophers; it solved the most difficult question in which

they had entangled themselves, and the most deeply interesting. It superseded their conflicting arguments on the destiny of man, and made historical fact banish metaphysical doubt. See its political bearing; how large a portion it has coloured of the broad surface of the stream of time. On theory and practice, mind and manners, private life and public history, the past and the future, how illimitable are its influences! And then again each single point on which it bears has itself also a like infinity. If the poet aims to make his verse an echo to the sense, whether he describe natural objects or human actions, well may the language of the religious teacher unintentionally assume a mingled character in discoursing of these vast interchanges of physical, intellectual, social, moral, and spiritual influences, and even an apostle blend the mention of a material and a moral resurrection; of noble principles and elevated space; of the right hand of majesty, and the influence of truth and love, by which Christ reigns in the power of God; and so mingling them, exhort: "If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God."

The spirit of this exhortation I take to be, that it becomes the Christian to cultivate a moral elevation of sentiment, feeling, desire, or character. And I shall endeavour to show in what such elevation consists, and how it is promoted by Christianity generally, and in particular by the fact of the resurrection of Christ.

The very terms *elevation of sentiment*, &c., are apt to excite in some minds notions of affectation, cant, and hypocrisy, of turgid language, exaggerated emotion, and extravagant assumption. But this is a gross perversion or mistake; the ridicule perhaps which might be due to the counterfeit fixing itself on the reality, and bringing the very name into disgrace. All real elevation is characterised by simplicity. There is no true dignity but with simplicity and sincerity. All scientific knowledge leads up to principles characterised not less by their simplicity than by their comprehensiveness. All greatness of intellect tends to express itself in a style characterised by simplicity. The refinement of taste is a progress towards simplicity. The power of art is in the combination of simple elements on simple principles. The greatest operations and the

noblest forms of nature are distinguished by simplicity. And such must be the characteristic of the loftiest moral character. It is "the double-minded man" that is "unstable in all his ways:" energy is the attribute, and success the frequent reward, of singleness of heart and of aim, of feeling and of purpose. With whatever qualities he may be gifted, a crooked politician can never be a great statesman. Chicanery and double dealing are mean and little, from the tricks of imperial diplomacy to those of the pettiest trade. All great philanthropists are simple characters; Howard was. All great philosophers are simple; Locke and Newton were. All great deliverers of nations are simple characters; Washington was. The affinities of evil are with complexity, and those of good with simplicity. Of the apostles, Judas was the most complex character, and John the most simple. It is when the eye is single that the whole body is full of light. Here is a line in which every one may seek the things which are above. It is a path open to all stations, like heaven; from the highest elevations or deepest valleys of society. When Christ ascended from the earth, it was from the lofty mountain-top of Olivet; when he rose from the dead, it was from the lowly sepulchre in the garden of the Arimathean. Alike easy from each was his upward course towards the right hand of the Majesty on high. Were there a class of persons in society who, by some peculiar moral training, could bring themselves to, and maintain themselves in, a high degree of simplicity and sincerity, their moral power would be without a rival. The tongue of bigotry would falter in attempting to anathematise them; political faction would quail and shrink from conflict with them; wealth would feel its purse-proud heart sinking, and blush for its comparatively worthless accumulation; the lustre of the coronet would grow dim, and the ermine be a mere covering. "Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay," is a precept that raises in its observance the Christian towards the Deity, to whose dignity it belongs that his "promises are yea and amen in Christ Jesus;" the sublime simplicity of eternal truth.

Oh, it is sad to see how many there are who understand not this—whose lives are a vain effort to make a false impression; who are ever aiming to produce an exaggerated

notion of their talents, or their acquirements, or their connections, or their influence in society, or their possessions, or of something or other which they are not, or have not! These are the little turmoils of little souls. They have a false notion of greatness. It is within their grasp, but instead of looking up to simplicity of character, they look down to trickery, and entangle themselves in a maze, and fritter life away, offering false appearances to procure false opinion, and sowing the wind to reap the whirlwind. They miss the first element of moral greatness, without which there is no real greatness.

In religion, what mistakes have ever been made about elevation of sentiment! and how low are many notions of being "above the world"! There were saints, as they were called, who planted themselves on the top of pillars and pinnacles, as if physical height were the object desired, and they were thereby so much nearer heaven. Others identified elevation of feeling with abasement of external condition, and because there were those who idolised riches, made vows of voluntary poverty, and with a falser moral taste than even that of the unjust steward who could not dig and to beg was ashamed, they would not dig, and to beg were not ashamed, but proud. Others thought it high and great to sever all natural ties and affections, and called denuding their souls of what makes the soul a rich and glorious thing a devoting of it to God. These follies of past days are not passed away; they survive amongst us, though in varied forms. What now are elevated sentiments in religion, with one class? Abstruse meditation on the abstruse propositions which they call religion. Sublimity to them is the splitting of a hair, the right division of the mathematical point which parts the one true faith from all the deadly heresies. And when are others on their pleasant mountains and in sight of the celestial city, but when an excited state of the animal system gives them something like the delirious joy of fever, and they hear Christ whispering to them the assurance of salvation, and forget all realities in visions of angels, thrones, and temples. And what is the elevation of a much soberer class of religionists, but simply mental occupation on what they deem peculiarly religious topics, on God and the Bible, prayer and praise, death and judgment, heaven and hell? Now, the fact is

that elevation of sentiment in religion can only be shown, distinctly and satisfactorily, in relation to the things which are around us, not in abstraction from them or hostility towards them. Christ instructed his disciples to be above the world while *in* the world. *He* walks not with God who walks away from the works of God, in which God lives, into the region of his own unsubstantial fancies and fruitless reveries. The man who could only worship at an altar of stone had a lower spirit of piety than he who could kneel on the mountain, by the stream, in the upper room of a house, or in the deep, dark dungeon. The prophet who prayed looking towards Jerusalem had a narrower soul than that better prophet who prayed looking up to heaven. True piety is not the distinct work of a distinct faculty of the mind, but the upward direction of all its faculties, and the perfection thereby of all its thoughts, emotions, and pursuits. One man seeks things which are above: how? he shuts himself up in a cloister, and repeats words with sacred names often intermingling therein. Another seeks the things which are above: how? he goes amongst men, in their daily vocations, and he promotes their loving one another as brethren, inasmuch as God hath made of one blood all nations of men. That is Christian elevation. Christ only stood on a pinnacle of the temple of Jerusalem in a vision of diabolical temptation: it was when, in reality, he stood in the streets of Jerusalem, and his voice of meek wisdom was heard winning sinners to penitence and healing the diseased, that the Son of Man was in heaven and in the bosom of his Father. He then built himself a lofty monument in men's memories and hearts which should stand when of all the towers and turrets of the temple, and of that pile of isolated and ceremonial piety which it symbolised, not one stone should be left upon another. In religion, nicety of creed is not elevation of sentiment; enthusiastic fervour of emotion is not elevation of sentiment; occupation in ceremonial forms and actions is not elevation of sentiment; abstraction from the concerns of life and the interests of humanity is not elevation of sentiment; Christ sitteth at the right hand of God in the progressive attainment of universal knowledge, the feeling of universal sympathy, the exercise of universal influence, and the contemplation of universal love, the love

which creates and regulates to bless; and in aspiring from our lowlier sphere towards such a state, we are truly seeking the things which are above.

In society, in professions and occupations, in literature, in men's views of civil institutions, there is much mistake about that in which refined and elevated sentiment consists. In old language, morals and manners were identical, and it is a false refinement by which they are separated. The only real politeness is that of benevolence, giving no pain which can be avoided even in the veriest trifles, save where the sacrifice of truth would be involved. To affect more than this, and call it an elevation of the tone of society, is miscalling a descent into the regions of artifice, selfishness, hollowness, and malignity. So the boasted "good people," yet whose manners so often hurt and wound, might reasonably question their own hearts and minds. There can never be bad taste, or lack of refinement, so as to annoy, in a pure and intelligent benevolence. A high sense of honour is often a very low thing; beneath, not above, what goes by the humbler name of morality. It injures the defenceless, and makes life the sport of folly, without a blush. "Rising in society" is not a moral ascension. It is only getting above one sphere of attraction to be influenced by another, where there is still the principle of gravitation, drawing downward, downward still. There can be no elevation of thought, feeling, or character among the luxuriously idle, whose only business is pleasure. Then, how absurd are the distinctions of trade and profession, when they pass beyond the bounds of mere description, and become indications of respect or contempt! We owe to the associations which weakness and vanity have hung around these distinctions a world of servility, sycophancy, and mental prostitution. We owe to the same cause the corruption of many pure hearts and noble minds. It has been the bane of Christian verity in the church, of political integrity in the senate, of easy and even justice in tribunals, and of frank and manly intercourse in society. The little pride of dissent has consecrated a folly of this class. There is a sort of prescriptive restriction on its ministers of combining any vocation with their stated duties except that of teachers of youth. This prevails among most of those who assume to be the

respectable dissenters, and has even found its way into the allotment of their legal privileges. Now, between preaching to adults and educating youth there is very little real affinity. The modes of instruction are as different as the ages of those to be instructed. Excellence in either may be, and very commonly is, the companion of gross defectiveness as to the other. In fact, they mutually tend to produce unfitness. He must be a very extraordinary man indeed who does not become a worse preacher in the same proportion as he grows a better schoolmaster; or a less efficient schoolmaster by the cultivation of the peculiar faculties which render him a more impressive and useful preacher. There are very many other vocations which would harmonise far better with either than they do with each other. But most of all do the false and the true elevation of sentiment part company in the mode of our regarding social institutions. There the one delights in privilege; the other seeks common good. There the one would exalt the few, proportionately, or rather disproportionately; the other would raise the many absolutely. In the affairs of communities, elevated sentiment regards the lowest and largest class. Priestley was an example of the one, and Burke of the other; and the former originated the expression of "the greatest happiness of the greatest number;" while the latter was looking up to the turrets of a feudal castle, with the silken banner floating above them. In taste, manners, morals, society, politics, in all the affairs of life, all the world over, the real refinement and elevation, the real aspirations after the things which are above, must be found in the simplicity of wisdom and benevolence, going straight forward to the true, the good, the useful,—living in love, which is to live in God, and to be in heaven already. That is the true rising of the soul above the world, which looks down with no cold or contemptuous gaze, but draws the world upward and onward too. It is a contemplation of the future, with no deadness to the present, but which irradiates the present with the coming brightness of futurity.

I said that this elevation of feeling was promoted by Christianity, considered generally; and by its great and leading fact, the resurrection of Christ, in particular.

It is promoted by Christianity generally. Look at its

vehicle, that glorious book, the Bible. What a magnificent collection it is! There, indeed, is something for the mind to grapple with, whether in logic, in learning, or in imagination. How it tramples under foot all the technicalities of pedantic art, and all the petty finicalities and squeamishnesses of false delicacy of taste, that cannot bear heaven's wind to blow upon it! There is the proper food for a rich and vigorous and universal intellect. Hark to the songs of its bards,—those bards who were also statesmen, warriors, chieftains, reformers: how they peal on the ear, echoing the cherubim and seraphim who continually cry, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty!" Look at its narrative, its wonderful narrative, which reads like all other history idealised, and the hand of God made visible, guiding the revolutions of this diurnal sphere; while yet it is full of lessons of practical wisdom for every where and every day. Look at the origin of the gospel: provincial, and yet to change the destiny of the empire of the world; Jewish, and yet to impose a new devotion on the philosophic spirits of Greece and on the warlike lords of Rome. Its messengers, peasants and fishermen; its first converts, the people, the mere people, the despised people; but its badge to be borne on banners and surmount the proudest diadems. No pomp of oratory or patronage of power marshalled its way; but its herald was "the voice of one crying in the wilderness." How love sprang forth amid dissension, and levelled the barriers of her birth-place! How sublimer virtues than the world had known became the common qualities of common people! Publicans and sinners rose into saints and martyrs. The world was abashed, and bowed before things which were above it. And there was the proclamation of its mighty doctrines, of God's impartiality, and man's fraternity and equality, and the essentiality of holiness alone, and judgment, and restoration. And there were its precepts of the "love which fulfils the law." And can we enter into the spirit of all this, yet rest in the little trickery, and vain enthusiasm, and false estimates, that affect to soar, but only crawl? This is a book to make man look up to heaven, and derive from heaven feelings which exalt his nature, and bless his species. This is the spirit which the world needs for the world's redemption. "The spirit of glory and of God is upon you," said an apostle; and as our

religion is understood and felt, it worketh mightily, and "the wilderness and the solitary place shall be made glad, and the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose."

The world celebrates to-day Christ's resurrection. Would that the world felt the full power of that resurrection! There was one, unschooled in adventitious forms, but grace was on his lips, and he moved in all the gentleness of love. Would that his vain adorers better knew the carpenter's son of Nazareth! That good shepherd would hear of no outcasts from his fold, and for its common good he laid down his life. He felt that he was himself a better temple to the Lord than that which Solomon built or that which Herod adorned. "In him there was no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth." He came into the world, and he loved the world, and he died for the world, and yet the while he was in heaven, and abode with the Father. His heart was ever with God. And he arose from the dead. Perfect humanity accomplished its glorious destiny. Then were gathered the first-fruits of them that slept. From that darkness sprang up new light, from that grave a new life. *We* are risen with Christ, therefore, to seek things which are above. To be of him, is to have the purity, refinement, elevation of soul, which have been described. "We walk in newness of life with Christ Jesus." We have another world in prospect, but which blends harmoniously with this, making the production of goodness and happiness the great end of both. Our immortality is not an alienation from earthly and social utility, but its best source and stimulus. If genuine Christians are separated by their elevation, it is that they may raise the rest. The first-fruits do but harbinger the harvest. Not as an isolated dream, but as an all-pervading principle, may we cultivate that "spiritual-mindedness which is life and peace." So shall we rise with Christ from the grave of coldness, inertness, and corruption, and ascend with him to the heaven of light and love; that heaven which bends over all benignantly, and in its elevation is simple, majestic, universal, and everlasting.

Sermon XV.—Subornation of Insincerity.

"I rejoiced greatly that I found of thy children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father" (2 John 4).

Who does not profess to admire and love sincerity? It is the theme of universal eulogy, and very deservedly so, and in a certain sense very honestly so; for those who have no intention of practising it themselves yet perceive that in many points it would be very convenient to them that it should be practised by others, and so it has their hearty recommendation. And yet with all this praise there is, perhaps, not another virtue with which society deals so harshly. We have heard of political virtues being expiated on the scaffold, but perfect sincerity would subject its possessor to a living martyrdom, which would endure from childhood to old age. As a Christian grace, certain is its crown of glory hereafter; but not less certain is its crown of thorns here. Its way to immortality is by a crucifixion. It is true, that notwithstanding these external inflictions, it may have internal sources of consolation and strength. That is only saying that the wisdom of Providence may counteract the folly of man. It is no merit of theirs who hedge up the straightforward path, and would if they could make the fence an insurmountable barrier: they are quite as culpable as if they were completely successful; and that culpability is not trifling. We have no slight responsibility in this matter. It ought to weigh heavily on a man's conscience, if he has been the cause of another's deviating from sincerity and frankness into the crooked ways of concealment and guile. When we pray that the kingdom of God may come, we mean that it should come in others' hearts as well as in our own: our duty is not to obstruct it any where. It is no justification of repressing a virtue in others that we practise it ourselves. If, for instance, we plume ourselves upon speaking out our own opinions, but do it in a manner so violent and overbearing that we drive others into the suppression of their honest convictions, it may be that we do as much harm by the fervour as benefit by the frankness. Our sincerity is not good, in so far as to another it becomes the stimulus to insincerity. It was often remarked, when attempts were making to rouse the

sympathies of the people of this country in favour of the Greeks, that the character of their Turkish masters was one which might be regarded with much greater moral complacency; that the Turk was manly, open, truthful in his language, but the Greek cunning, deceptive, fraudulent. Now, the same thing might be said of oppressors and slaves all over the world. Why should those practise acts of cunning who have nothing to apprehend, or resort to fraud who can use force with impunity? The vices of slaves are generated by the condition of slavery. The frankness of the tyrant arises not from the love of truth, but from the sense of power: he keeps down truth in his bondsmen; he is guilty in their degradation, for the cause of their insincerity is in his oppressions; and if it were not by oppression, but by bribery, by persuasion, by talking, by legislation, by influence, by Church government, or in any other way, he would be guilty still. This is the evil against which I warn you. I am not now preaching against the *practice* of insincerity, but against the *promotion* of insincerity. I wish you to heed the distinction. You may be very sincere, and yet do many things which tend to make those about you less sincere than they otherwise would be. There is a subornation of insincerity which is not less vicious than falsehood itself, inasmuch as it produces falsehood in others. There may be no such intention, perhaps a very opposite intention; but it is weak to talk of intention when the tendency of actions may be ascertained by reflection and exhibited in experience. "I did not mean any harm," is a contemptible apology for having occasioned mischief which reflection might have anticipated and precaution might have prevented. We are responsible, not only for the goodness of our intentions, but for the use of all the means in our power by which those intentions may be made wise as well as good, and their useful realisation brought within the compass of a rational probability. Without such use the plea is very pitiful, and the conduct very wrong.

In most things connected with religion, what a tide of influence sets in to bear down individual sincerity! What can be more hostile to it than that dogma, so generally held, so vehemently maintained, so vigorously enforced, of the condemnability of opinion? The wide-spread notion that belief is not merely intellectual, but moral—not neces-

sary, but voluntary—seems at times to have darkly overclouded almost the whole horizon of human honesty. It strikes at the very root of sincerity, and excites man's fears, so as to make him palter with his mental convictions, and become unfaithful to his own conscience. To declare to an inquirer, "The reception of this doctrine will save your soul, the rejection of that doctrine will consign you to damnation," is a declaration of war against truthfulness. It is doing your utmost to make him a partial inquirer or a hypocritical professor. How many would be induced to doubt, deny, or be silent about the demonstrated propositions of Euclid, if a large and influential portion of society should uphold, that to affirm the whole to be greater than a part was indicative of vicious disposition, and worthy of future suffering. We often hear of the dishonesty of unbelievers in their attacks on Christianity. They have shown much disingenuousness in assailing it by insinuations and covertly. The blame is not all their own; it must be shared by those Christians who make such opinions, however erroneous, a legal offence, a social proscription, the token of God's eternal reprobation. What greater influence could be used to make them disingenuous? But in this respect the teacher has been as hardly tempted as the sceptic. How, in some churches, commences that priesthood which has for so important a part of its ministry the inculcation of Christian sincerity and simplicity? By professing a call from the Holy Spirit, which, to say the least, cannot be evidenced; by subscribing a long and complicated creed when, to say the least, but little of it can have been investigated. Carry this further. Connect temporal advantages, connect political advantages, connect bright prospects and hopes, connect large emoluments, connect the means of subsistence, with the profession of faith in certain dogmas, and the preference of certain forms and systems, and what but insincerity, to a great extent, can be the result? If any intended to generate equivocation, the suppression of honest thought, a bias to outward acquiescence without inward conviction, what means more adapted to that end could be devised? Prevent diversity of opinion, indeed! the most that can be done is to produce uniformity of expression. Churches of humbler form and means have tried their power in the

same way. They have their little tests to fence their little circles. They roll their mimic echoes of the thunder of excommunication, and within their pale keep men's tongues quiet or servile. The influence extends beyond all churches; and those who worship no God are horror-struck at those who only adore one Divine person; and he who knows nothing shudders at him who does know something, though he only believes a little. Hence a monstrous mass of ignorance, servility, and hypocrisy of profession, in religion. But this preserves purity of faith, we are told. What faith? For all creeds are, or may be, thus preserved. It destroys all purity of faith; for that consists in the impartiality of the adoption and the honesty of the profession. All that is most valuable about faith is destroyed. Truth is reduced to the level of error, by being separated from the clear perception of its nature, of its evidences, and of its tendencies. The Christian ceases to sit at the feet of Jesus; or, if he does, it is with his ears stopped, and a creed in his hand for his eyes to rest upon. Where there is individual honesty, there must be variety of opinions. The gospel is more glorified by a hundred different but independent interpreters than by a thousand implicit believers. The real and final unity of principle must be pursued by an unbounded individuality of thought and speech. These are the intellectual evils of the practices described. Of not less magnitude are the moral evils. To bring insincerity into direct contact with religious faith must needs deprave the whole character; its simplicity is marred; social integrity is impaired; fraudulence and trickery are associated with the notion of religion; public morality is lowered; and all this is done for the sake of elevating opinions, or supporting a system or a sect. Oh! those are the great reformers,—those are the real champions of truth,—who assert every man's right to a distinct opinion, if he have mental energy enough to form one; and who would no more sit in judgment on his character, or in any way affect his reputation or comforts, on account of his conclusions, than they would on account of his stature.

"If such things be done in the green tree, what shall be done in the dry?" If thus it fares with sincerity in the church, what should we expect in the world? though truly it can scarcely be much worse. Still it is not behind

in the emulation of evil. How common it is for falsehood to be consecrated, and insincerity to be enforced, even by the enactments of law, the administration of justice, and the institutions of government! How often is the criminal recommended solemnly to deny his criminality, and by one falsehood take the chance of inducing other falsehoods and the evasion of justice! How often must an accusation charge that which is not, to open the way for sitting in judgment on that which is! It is no trifling evil that legal fictions should be so established as to divest fiction of disgrace. How many public forms are full of falsehood! Each generation may in succession become so familiarised to these things as to be scarcely conscious of the fact; but is no price paid for that familiarity? Does it not, in succession, blunt the moral sense of each generation?

Then, to what has the competitive system in trade and commerce brought us? Is a transparent sincerity the common quality of mercantile transactions? Is it not comparatively rare, and by its rarity honourable; and by its merited honour, a merited condemnation of the prevailing system and spirit, showing that there is something wrong, and which should be amended? We make our literature a snare and trap for sincerity; we make it, by a long array of legal and social arrangements, most difficult for an honest and independent man, without wealth or party to back him, to get access to the public mind, save by catering to public prejudice. There is a premium for insincerity in every department; nor least of all in social intercourse. The man who always says what he thinks on any subject, however admirable his intellect, however benevolent his heart, however bland his manners, however unobtrusive his conversation, would stand but a poor chance, for some time at least, in society. He would be deemed odd, eccentric, disagreeable, and be outlawed by the conventionalism of the day. There is an established taste and talk, as well as an established faith. How many topics there are on which, to keep in with the common run of society, a woman must have no opinion, a man only one opinion—that perhaps a wrong one! These laws are appropriately enforced by wonder, ridicule, sarcasm, coldness, and ultimate proscription. Howard was called a busy, meddling, wrong-headed man, addicted strangely

to running about amongst gaols. Men declared Rousseau to be mad till they drove him so. By a ruder race, Whitfield and Wesley were pelted, by the very class of which thousands now sanctify their memories. Would that one could but show the mischief and misery of all this fraud, cant, ignorance, hollowness, and intolerance! Would that one could but display so persuasively as to be resistless, the beauty, the dignity, the practicability, the blessedness of perfect sincerity and truth in all concerns of religion, law, government, trade, literature, and society! Many disguises would be torn off which are now worn; many opinions avowed which are now suppressed; many forms abolished which are now consecrated: but how much would be done for the discovery of truth, how much for the dignity of character, and how much for the promotion of happiness! Hypocrisy has been said to be the homage which vice pays to goodness; were the tribute but remitted, the dominion of goodness would be extended. Oh, it holds good every where and always, "Let your yea be yea, and your nay, nay!" If we cannot accomplish this moral revolution, let us, at least, abstain from upholding any of the barriers which obstruct its approach: it must come; and when man's thoughts are on the tongue as in the heart, then will God's kingdom be coming on earth as it is in heaven.

People begin this unholy work too commonly even with those for the formation of whose characters they are responsible before God and man. I do not say they do it intentionally or consciously; but, certainly, the young are often initiated into insincerity by the conduct of those about them, and who should be especially on their guard against such a result. The child that is severely or injudiciously puuished for a fault, is thereby tempted to insincerity; a first falsehood has often been told from the feeling of fear. The child, naturally enough, sees more evil in the suffering than in the untruth. Then, how often does the parent try to gain a sort of reflected glory by an emblazoned display of the child's acquirements! The little observer sees the exaggeration while it loves the applause, and anon tries of itself to accomplish the same end by the same means. Children are keen observers and apt imitators. If they see persons civilly treated to their faces,

and ridiculed behind their backs, they may very likely learn the lesson which was not meant for them. The remarks or questions of children are often inopportune and puzzling; that is no justification of the conduct which, without thinking, it may be, practically teaches them to stifle inquiry, or be content with a verbal mystification to hide ignorance.

One might accumulate instances for hours of this evil influence over the young—this securing to them an inheritance of insincerity. It is not the less dangerous because unintentional. Parental responsibility should lead to parental caution. The leading-strings of unconscious example too often prevent children walking in truth. But to look close to this, is within the spirit of the commandment which we have received from the Father; and this is pre-eminently one of the cases in which, to reform others, men must reform themselves. We should not only abhor the deceitful tongue, but avoid the circumstances which prompt the deceit. We should pray, "Lead us not into temptation," and take care not to walk into temptation. Our character, as Christians, is children of the light. Truth of heart and voice is above all truth of doctrine, but will ultimately insure it more than any other means. There is no more certain or exalted characteristic of religion than this. The regeneration of the gospel is to be born with Christ, to bear witness of the truth. The fact that God seeth the heart is a strong motive, weakened by the seeming remoteness of his judgment. The frankness which lets men see it, supplies a weak motive, which is strengthened by the promptness of the judgment which they exercise. This subject goes much deeper than that mere avoidance of gross falsehood which ranks amongst the very elements of morality. It should produce that searching self-examination which detects the deceits men are apt to put on their own minds and consciences. It should make man require of himself that which God requires of him—truth in the inward parts. No fiends without have ever done so much to "palter with us, in a double sense," as the tempter within. There is the deep root of deception; there should be the lucid fountain of simplicity, sincerity, frankness of character. We should not shrink from avowing our real motives to ourselves; that is the way in which iniquity is

found to be hateful; and man gains satisfaction in righteousness, whatever its earthly and immediate consequences.

And let no one say that, in this discourse, I am aiming at any thing Utopian or chimerical. I pretend not to say by what degrees or in what precise way the world will grow more honest and individuals more transparent; nor would I underrate the virtue that exists. Enough there is, blessed be God, to redeem the name of humanity from its calumniators. My object is perfectly simple, tangible, practical, and practicable. It is only this: do not set snares for others' sincerity, or for your own. Do not influence sceptics to disingenuousness, by joining an outcry about damnable heresies or doubts. Do not help to pollute the springs of Christian instruction by demanding that the teacher should profess and ever adhere to the previous faith or prejudices of his pupils. Do not judge character by opinions, and assume depravity in the one on the ground of error in the other. Do not uphold institutions and practices which legalise falsehood that would be ridiculous, but that all falsehood is worse than ridiculous. Do not take the fact in the proverb for a precept: "It is naught, it is naught, saith the buyer; but when he is gone his way, he boasteth." Do not countenance cant of any kind, interested or unmeaning, in any department—literature, education, society. Do not praise or frighten, or suffer others to praise or frighten, your children out of the straightforward path. Heed your own example, both in its direct and indirect influence. Be true to yourself, to your inmost soul. Live in the conscious presence of the God of truth. These are the moral of my discourse—these are practical precepts—these are, I am sure, Christian precepts; and may God give us grace to observe them. Amen.

Sermon XVI.—On Temptation.

Part I. Avoidance.

"Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity" (Psalm cxix. 37).

"A vain thing," and "vanity," are terms very often put, in the Old Testament scriptures, for idols and idolatry.

The prophets of Israel, glowing with the lofty conceptions of Deity which they derived from revelation, could not but think and speak contemptuously of the absurd personifications whose figures were cast in gold and silver for the halls of wealth, and hewn out of the log for the hovel of poverty, and made the objects of a noisy and degrading homage, as inefficacious as they were unconscious. Often did they portray, with a severe and dignified irony, the folly of such practices. Often did they indignantly contrast the majesty of Jehovah with the senselessness of the base things which were set up as his competitors for man's adoration. Often did they denounce the guilt of idolatry to their countrymen, and warn them of the danger of drawing down upon themselves the most awful judgments. And while sometimes they dilated on this theme with all the copiousness and gorgeousness of Eastern poetry, at others they concentrated the host of strong emotions which it raised in them into a single word or phrase, which they imprinted as a brand on the very forehead of national apostasy. And thus was it that, in their language, the language of divine truth, the gods of the neighbouring countries, whether the meanest tribes or the mightiest empires,—those of the Hittites and Jebusites, or those of Egypt and Assyria; whatever their imagined attributes, or their elevation in the hierarchy of divinities; with all their temples, and altars, and high places, and caverns of divination, and consecrated groves; and the varied attractions of their worship, and the multitude of their priests, and the millions of their adorers, —were all compressed and described and condemned in this one word, *vanity*. This, more probably than the frivolous disposition which we commonly intend by that epithet, was the meaning of the writer of this Psalm when he offered the prayer which has just been read as my text. The connected clause is, "And quicken thou me in thy way." Now, though the "way of God" includes the sobriety of mind and lowliness of heart which are opposed to vanity, and he is in that way who "walks humbly with his God," yet so to confine the meaning of the terms would be putting a very limited interpretation on a general expression. Or if we expound the "way of God," in its full acceptation, as the way of truth, piety, and righteousness, then "vanity" seems neither iniquitous nor comprehensive enough to be thus placed in

solitary opposition. But if we take "vanity" in the sense of idolatry, that mass of error, guilt, and wretchedness; and the "way of God," of his prescribed service, in pure worship and moral obedience,—the opposition is then apparent and appropriate, and the two clauses form a prayer whose fulness, strength, and earnestness cannot but interest the devout mind. "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity."

In this prayer, the psalmist petitions that he may not even behold idolatrous practices, lest, perhaps, he should be unawares overcome, and be surprised into a participation of the guilt which he only intended to witness; or lest, though preserved from this, he should yet, by having it familiarised to his sight, contract a culpable indifference towards it in his heart; or, if his own firmness could securely abide the trial, that his example might not lead others into dangerous situations, and plunge them into an abasement which, unless thus practically encouraged by him, they might have escaped; or he might pray under the influence of pain and regret on account of others, who had begun with merely witnessing the celebration of those ceremonies of iniquity, and were gradually led on till they became their votaries and advocates; and it would certainly be his desire, not only that his eye should not witness these practices, but that there should be no such practices in the land for any eye to witness; but all its inhabitants, and all around them, be true worshipers of the God of truth. And with these several views and motives we may and should adopt the prayer as against temptation generally. The great and easily besetting sin of the writer's time and country does not exist to us in such relative circumstances as to render necessary his prayer against idolatry. In the strict theological sense of the word, it may be practised by numbers called Christians. They worship beings inferior to the Father—beings pictured in their prayers by the attributes of corporeal form. Whatever there may be wrong in this, it is free from the foul immoralities which made ancient idolatry so enormously wicked. Other directions, therefore, claim precedence for our watchfulness against moral danger, our self-jealousy, and our prayers. In whatever direction our chief peril may be, let us resist its first approaches, adopting in devout humility the psalmist's supplication: "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity."

The writer feared lest he should unawares be entrapped into a participation of the guilt which originally he only intended to witness. And it has always been the fact that many have fallen by a temptation which they despised. The undue confidence of strength is itself weakness. "Is thy servant a dog," said Hazael, "that he should do this thing?" And yet he did it. "Though all men forsake thee, yet will not I," said Peter to Christ, "though I should die with thee." And yet he did forsake him, within a few hours, and most basely. There is no danger so great as the unconsciousness or disregard of danger. There is, in the ordinary circumstances of human life, a traceable and obvious proportion between the amount of temptation and the amount of transgression. While it would be unjust to judge individuals by this presumption, we cannot avoid observing it wherever large masses of mankind are concerned; and it is useful that we should observe it there, for the knowledge of human nature is the knowledge of ourselves. Wherever institutions, customs, or the progress of events have given any class a preponderating influence in legislation, it has uniformly happened that the interests of the community have been sacrificed to the interests of that class. In the democracy of ancient Athens, the security of private property was comparatively small; the burdens of the state were thrown disproportionately on wealthy individuals. In France, before the Revolution, they fell almost exclusively upon the poorer classes. Each was exempted or despoiled as it had opportunity to perpetrate injustice. Wherever ecclesiastics have long held political power, creeds have been complicated, ceremonies have been numerous, dignities have been created, wealth has been accumulated, pretensions have been advanced, and, unless some controlling power has arisen, there has been an extensive and extending interference with the concerns of civil and social life. Wherever there is not a vigilant police to prevent crime, nor a tolerable certainty and just proportion of punishment, offences have always been numerous. Wherever law is an advantageous profession, laws tend to become numerous, obscure, uncertain, and burdensome. What is the moral of all this? Not that we should condemn those classes as more depraved than others; for they have only yielded to temptations to which others, similarly circumstanced, have yielded also.

The fault is more in the systems than in the men. Nor is all the lesson learnt when we have pleaded, or laboured, for the regulation of those systems by principles founded on the human constitution and the dictates of righteousness. There remains the important admonition to us, that the proportion of sin to temptation seldom varies; that we are accessory to our own degradation if we needlessly place ourselves in circumstances of trial, though we may be very fearless of the result; that though we may be conscious of no disposition to abuse power, we ought not to hold irresponsible power, lest it should generate the disposition; that though we may be conscious of strict integrity, we should not become the unchecked depositaries of others' property, in a manner and to an extent which offer strong inducements to forfeit that integrity; in a word, that we ought, whenever we can, to avoid placing ourselves in circumstances of moral danger, because those circumstances have, in numberless instances, proved too strong for men as confident and as good as ourselves, and therefore may so prove to us. To turn away from beholding vanity is the best, perhaps the only, proof of a deep and sincere determination to resist it. It is the best point at which that resistance can be made, —very often, practically, the only one where it can be made effectually.

The psalmist feared that, even were this worst evil escaped, he might yet, by familiarity, contract a culpable indifference to the sin against which he prayed. In this, too, we should sympathise with him; and be aware that though we may not actually commit crime, yet continued exposure to temptation is injurious to the feeling which a pious and holy mind should cherish. It is apt to destroy that sensitiveness, that delicacy of the perception of right and wrong, that tenderness of conscience, that fineness and strength of what we may call the moral sense, which constitutes so beautiful an ornament, and affords so powerful a protection, to goodness of character. To the eye and ear, the loathsomest sights and sounds, if constantly presented, become in time less offensive, if not altogether indifferent. It is the same in morals. Let the inhabitant of a slave country retain as much as he may of the kindest feelings of humanity, his slumbers will scarcely be disturbed, at any rate his nerves will thrill with little of the horror that

would be felt here, at the sound of the lash on human bodies, and the scream of pain. Circumstances have impaired in him, I do not say his moral rectitude, but one blessed constitutional preservative of mankind from cruelty. If a man mix frequently and habitually with profane swearers, it may be, perhaps, that to the day of his death a vain oath may never pass his lips; but it can scarcely be that such sounds should not, by the diminished shock they give his pious feeling, indicate a diminution of constant, reverential emotion towards the Deity. And this evil spreads from the particular case to the general principle of virtue. Conscience acquires a bias. It ceases to have the same respect for each of the commandments of God, and that is to have less respect for them all. It descends from the seat of judgment occasionally to occupy the standing of the advocate. Excuses and palliations are invented, and sometimes the straight rule of life is carelessly applied. Whether this induce a corresponding laxity of principle in all other cases, or whether a lurking consciousness of being over-lenient to one set of sins is sought to be made up for by increased vehemence in the condemnation of others, it is manifest, either way, that the man is not what he was, nor what he should be. Though he may not have been signally defeated, he is a less vigorous and less valuable combatant in the Christian warfare. He is in a state which every man who is in earnest about his own moral improvement, about his salvation even, must anxiously deprecate.

I have supposed the text to imply that, though the firmness of the writer might sustain him through a severe trial of his principles, yet that he would avoid it, lest his example should encourage others, who would be less able or less disposed to endure it, and to whose transgressions he would thus become accessory. In this, again, he is worthy of our imitation. In this spirit is the New Testament exhortation to "avoid even the appearance of evil," and the declaration of Paul, in reference to some who had been led into idolatrous practices from seeing older Christians partake of food which had been sacrificed to idols, that if meat caused his brother to offend, he would eat no meat while the world standeth. Much of the power of example belongs to us, independently of our will; much of

its exercise is independent also; we cannot divest ourselves of it; it is ours without—or, if we dislike it, against—our consent. This kind of influence is one condition of social existence. We are not, therefore, to conclude it to be without responsibility, any more than speech, reason, or any of the faculties of our nature, which are similarly circumstanced. In determining on the innocence of pursuits, amusements, indulgences, we should at least make one item in the calculation—their effect on others, the possibility of their becoming a stumbling-block, and causing any to transgress. If there be a man so clear of judgment, so pure in heart, so firm of purpose, that he can abide uncontaminated in the tents of wickedness; that he can pass through situations of the severest temptation without swerving a hair's-breadth from the strictest line of duty; that he can be the frequent associate of the profligate, and yet their evil communications corrupt not his good manners, he ought—unless compelled by some paramount obligation of justice or benevolence—to abstain for the sakes of those who, where he safely advances, may follow to their own peril and perdition. Such obligations there have doubtless been; as on those who had a divine mission for the reformation of mankind, or those who have had before them the fair and animating prospect of accomplishing some glorious object of philanthropy; but these are rare—the exceptions, not the rule, of human life; and rare also—oh, how rare!—is the firmness and elevation of character which has just, for argument's sake, been supposed. The very disposition needlessly to brave temptation is an indication of not having arrived at such perfection.

Perhaps the prayer of the text was prompted by observation of others, and grief at their aberrations. *They* have gazed on vanity till they became its votaries, slaves, and victims; turn *mine* eyes away. The failings of others are our warnings; and impressive ones they are. Are you prone to defer future advantages to present gratifications; to underrate the respectability, comfort, influence, which may be comparatively remote, yet an attainable prize in this world, and the seemingly still more remote things of the world to come; to be impatient of personal privations and self-denials; to strive for the prompt accomplishment of your desires, at any rate?—Look at Esau, a cha-

racter with many estimable qualities—frank, generous, and affectionate—selling his birthright for a mess of pottage; bartering, for the immediate indulgence of his appetite or relief of his exhaustion, the privilege then most dearly cherished; selling at that pitiful price the first blessing of his father and his God; and entailing on himself years of tearful and useless repentance. Are you the favoured child of prosperity, raised to that eminence of fortune from which the toils and struggles and endurances of the great mass of your fellow-creatures are only matter of philosophical or charitable contemplation; the enjoyments of sense, of taste, of intellect at your command, and those of piety not foreign to your heart?—Look at that king of Israel in whom this combination was carried to its highest degree; see how, in the plenitude of wealth and wisdom, he gazed on the vanity of idols, till condemnation mitigated into disapprobation, and that into endurance, and that grew into conformity, and that into advocacy and patronage, till he insulted the majesty of Jehovah by the foul altars of fabulous deities rising in immediate neighbourhood and impious opposition. Pride, passion, and avarice are the modern idols to which men thus apostatise. Or are you eager for wealth, eager for situations which place it within your reach, though not at your command?—Look at Judas—sincere as I think we must believe him to have been when first he attached himself to Christ, bearing the bag which contained the little store of that company poorly endowed in earthly treasure; hankering after its contents, and trespassing on them, and greedily anticipating their increase, and covering his fraud by hypocrisy, and, infuriated at reading detection in his Master's eye and under the joint influence of revenge and avarice, betraying for a bribe the Son of God. Well may the righteous pray to be prevented from taking the first step in these paths of death.

And yet this construction of the prayer has a sentiment of charity in it, identifying the writer in weakness with those who have stumbled and fallen; and ascribing the difference to more favourable circumstances, which are thankfully acknowledged, and whose continuance is earnestly supplicated. "By the grace of God," said Paul, "I am what I am." But for an occurrence in which he was only passive, an event most extraordinary and unexpected, he

might have remained a persecutor, instead of becoming an apostle. In that case, by his circumstances the God of justice would have tried him; but could he have had the excellence, the mental enjoyments, the glorious hopes, to which, as it was, he did attain? Obviously not. And the remembrance of what he had been operated to keep alive his charity, and to stimulate his affectionate zeal towards those who continued to be as he had been. In humility and charity should we censure, if censure we must, those who have, with us, "one human heart," though that heart may have been exposed to, and corrupted by, malignant influences from which we have been providentially shielded.

Lastly, I ascribed to the Psalmist the devout wish, not only that he might be preserved from the snares of idolatry, but that they might no longer be spread in the land; that there might not be this "vanity" for any eye to see. And thus the Lord's Prayer includes the petition that *we* may not be led into temptation, and also that the kingdom of God may come, and his will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Our heart's desire and prayer should daily be for the diminution of human guilt and wretchedness. We should encourage and support, to the best of our ability, whatever tends to effect that diminution. The expression of our own opinions, the observation of our example, may so tend, in a narrower or a wider circle, according to our stations. Let us give their full force to the side of truth, piety, justice, and charity. The formation of some new institutions, the amendment of others which exist, may have that tendency; let them have our ready countenance and active aid. The diffusion of knowledge has that tendency, in an eminent degree; be, then, the friends of universal education till its blessings cover the land, and are as common as heaven's air and sunshine. Religious worship and instruction are means to this end; be they the means of our personal adoption, of our constant recommendation. By whatever social arrangements men are placed in circumstances which present fewer temptations, history and experience assure us we may confidently reckon that vice itself will be diminished. These let us advance; and leave to others despairing lamentations over the total depravity of human nature, which, were they true,

would reduce goodness to the result of miracle alone, and make it unimportant whether man's eyes were turned away from vanity, or ceaselessly directed towards its most powerful allurements.

May it, then, be a constant object with us to adopt that course which is most favourable to the cultivation of piety and goodness. Let us avoid temptation as the surest mode of avoiding transgression. So far as the lot of others depends upon us, what we do should be regulated by the same principle. Servants, children, pupils, relatives, friends; for whomsoever we have to act, do, in this, unto others as ye would they should do unto you. As much as possible prevent the collision of their earthly interests with their religious and moral duties. They may be the poorer for it, and yet the better—and if the better, then the happier, here and hereafter.

And if temptation must be encountered, as often enough it must, without any voluntary addition on our part, then let us call up the energy of Christian motives in our minds, summon before us the blessings and the terrors of the world to come, endure as seeing Him who is invisible save to the eye of faith, by humble, fervent prayer invoke him to be strong in our weakness, and beseech him to turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, and fix them on the crown of glory which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give, in the day of retribution, to all them that love his appearing, and await it in holy obedience.

Sermon XVII.—On Temptation.

Part II. Resistance.

"The fining-pot is for silver and the furnace for gold: but the Lord trieth the hearts" (Proverbs xvii. 3).

The good man, if he be wise withal, will not needlessly expose himself to trials and temptations: though clear principles and long habit may seem to insure the firmness of his standing, he will still take heed lest he should fall; and, so far as is consistent with the demands of duty, he will keep out of circumstances which would surround him with inducements to transgress the laws of piety, integrity,

and benevolence. "Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity" was the supplication of the Psalmist; "lead us not into temptation" was the prayer which Christ taught his disciples to offer; to "avoid even the appearance of evil" was the earnest precept of an apostle. And so long as it is easier to shun than to resist; so long as it is true that "pride cometh before a fall, and the Lord loveth the humble;" so long as we see in the world that the amount of vice bears a constant proportion to the amount of temptation,—so long must this be the path of wisdom and of safety. But it would be a mistake to infer from this doctrine that Christian excellence is nothing more than negative goodness, which could be found in one who should be so situated as from birth to death never to encounter temptation at all. It would be a mistake to suppose that the avoidance of temptation should be a practical principle paramount to the claims upon us of God and truth, of duty to our fellow-creatures and even to ourselves. It would be a mistake to imagine that the temptations which abound in the world are not under the superintendence of Providence; have not their ends to answer, and those important ones, in the moral government of God; and are not essentially necessary as portions of his plan for the ultimate excellence and felicity of his rational creatures. It would be a mistake to suppose that the Christian warrior is not much oftener to fight than to fly; through much tribulation to enter the kingdom of heaven; to bear the cross before he wears the crown; and by successful conflict to lay hold on the promise to him that overcometh, that he shall sit down with the Saviour on his throne of glory. We should preclude these mistakes by coupling with such petitions and precepts as have just been quoted the doctrine of the text. It teaches us that temptation has its agency, in the providence of God, for the purification of man's heart; that the ways of God with us may be compared with those of the refiner of precious metals. He subjects them to a process which seems destructive, but the result of which is to separate the vile from the valuable, and to bring forth the latter free from debasing alloy, not only uninjured, but the more pure, useful, and resplendent. It is by trial that every faculty is developed; it is by successful resistance to evil that strength of character is not

only exhibited, but actually formed; it is by repeated triumphs over perils that character is conducted to maturity and perfection. "This sore travail hath God given to the sons of men to be exercised withal;" and he hath given it in wisdom and in love; for his glory, and for their highest good.

A character strong in the power of resisting temptation partakes in a high degree of moral sublimity. What is the charm of that noble sketch of the seraph Abdiel in Milton's *Paradise Lost?* It is this principle of resistance. There is nothing imposing in his native dignity. He is surrounded with intelligences of a higher order; thrones, dominations, powers, the nobility of heaven. There is nothing particularly admirable in his conduct, considered apart from his circumstances. He merely retains his allegiance to Jehovah; he simply preserves gratitude towards goodness, and yields obedience to omnipotence. But he is alone faithful among the faithless. And our admiration is not the effect of mere contrast. That has its effect; but the materials of the contrast were the varied aspects of the temptation. There was example; but he resisted that. There were promise and threatening and ridicule; but he resisted them. There was the inducement of associations to which he had been accustomed—of affections which he had cherished—of reverence which he had paid; but he resisted these. There was the appearance of safety, and the hope even of triumph; but he resisted that. And therefore it is that he is more sublime than those gorgeous creations of the poet; than the legions of apostate spirits and their archangel leaders; that they stand abashed before him; and our hearts do him homage as he leaves the rebel camp on his long and lonely path of righteousness. Herein the poet was a theologian and a moralist. By his delineations he makes our feelings and sympathies do intellectual work, and teach us religious truth. His imagination has performed the office of a commentator on the doctrine of the text, that as "the fining-pot is for silver, and the furnace for gold, so the Lord trieth hearts." He has taught that resistance to temptation is moral greatness. There can be few more satisfactory certificates of goodness than the not walking with a multitude to do evil. The description is negative; but it has a large positive implication.

Few minds have ever been richer in moral truth than that of Milton. It was because he was not only one of the first of poets, but one of the best of men. It was eminently true in his case that "the heart of the wise teacheth him understanding and giveth learning to his lips." His own history is that of a series of resistances to temptations; and thus he became the man he was—a man for his country to glory in and reverence through all succeeding generations. His early thoughts and wishes were directed to the church. To minister in the sanctuary was the object of his holy and fervent aspirations. But the door was closed, only to be opened by the profession of a creed. He would not buy the opportunity of influencing others' minds by the voluntary degradation of his own. He would not "subscribe slave." Here was resistance to how much, not only without, but within; not only of temporal comfort, but of mental enjoyment; not only of selfish ease, but of benevolent aspiration. The next great event of his life was his return from Italy. What strong inducements there must have been for his remaining there! Where is there such a sojourn for a youthful poet? To how many have only its climate and its landscape been bonds—silken ones —but which no sense of duty could give them strength enough to break! To him what enchantment there must have been in those antique monuments, and those antique associations, with which that land of departed glory and everlasting loveliness is covered! The proofs remain of how deeply he felt the charm of its society. There too had he been loved and honoured. There his first laurels were woven, and the incense was burned before him of the most enthusiastic and intoxicating homage. He felt it all, and he left it all; for the sound of conflict came to him across the waves; the liberties of his country were in danger; and the battle of freedom was to be fought with tongue and pen and sword. He came; and he became the Defender of the People of England. In no bower of enchantment could his senses be so steeped in luxury as ever to deprive him of his armour, or stay him an instant from the field. Through long years, but most honourable and useful years, of political and theological controversy, he resisted the allurements of that poetry for which his soul was framed. And when the sense of sight was the anticipated sacrifice

to the task of vindicating a nation's rights and conduct to Europe, he *sacrificed* the sense of sight. And in disgrace, obscurity, old age, and blindness, must there not have been temptations to murmuring, sullenness, despondency? Must they not have crowded thick upon his brain, crying, "Curse God and die"? Then he dictated his immortal poem, and left also that record, which but a few years since was brought to light, which testifies how far he advanced beyond his age in his perception of the pure doctrine of the gospel of Christ. Noble-minded man! cast into a fiery furnace; but whose knee could never be made to bend to Mammon or to Baal, yet never neglected its filial reverence to Jehovah.

The history of the excellent, and the analysis of moral excellence, conduct us to a similar view of virtue as consisting very much of resistance to temptation. Good thoughts and wishes and resolutions arise in every mind. The difference is, that with too many they perish where they rose; while with the righteous they are carried forth into action. Humanity is never destitute of beneficent impulses; they are too seldom obeyed. Suppose a scene of wretchedness, like that which some of our manufacturing districts so often present, to be contemplated by any given number of spectators. Perhaps few, if any, would not feel an inward wish and prompting for its relief. But one cannot overcome the temptation of his indolence, which shrinks from the requisite exertion. Another cannot overcome his parsimony, which tells him he cannot move in such a matter without setting an example of liberal contribution. Another thinks, perhaps, that some ridicule in the circle of his associates might attach to his so employing himself; and he cannot overcome that. And so the suffering continues till some individual breaks the spell, and then men forget that there was a difficulty. The pleadings of animal appetite; the power of passions and habits; the prospect of present indulgence, gain, and honour; the evil principles and examples of society,—all are so many influences which virtue consists in encountering with a firm and unfailing resistance. As such resistance is repeated, the character acquires consistency and energy. The outward power diminishes as the inward power increases. Circumstances either command or are commanded. They form the character of the

feeble; they minister to the purposes and ultimate happiness of the strong. When Paul could say, "None of these things move me," he was master of his destiny. He was then in a state to move the world. He was sure of fulfilling his course with joy. This view is carried to its utmost extent in that monition to the persecuted Hebrew Christians, "Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin."

The word and works of God are full of beautiful and instructive analogies. They arise from the combination of simplicity and variety in the Divine plan; of simplicity in its principles, with boundless variety in its details. There are manifold operations of the one spirit which worketh in all. The spiritual condition of the good man—a devout, holy, benevolent state of mind—is called *life*. And what is one of the most striking characteristics of vitality in the natural world but the power of resisting external influences? The same elements surround the living body as encompass the dead; but they cannot decompose the one as they do the other. They loosen the particles of the one, and change their colour, and dissolve their texture, while on the other they make no impression whatever. This fact enters into the definition given by physiologists: there are other qualities; but as to this particular, life *is* the faculty of resistance. It is so with spiritual life. The man who has it, withstands the temptations of abundance, to make him a sensualist; of power, to make him dishonest; of ignorance or defencelessness in others, to make him unjust; of secrecy, to make him sin; and of credulity, to make him a deceiver. And this life has been generated and sustained by similar means to those which exhibit its maturity and strength.

How has Providence ordered that the bodily senses and the mental faculties should be brought to their full development? By repeated trials, exercising them as they are capable of being exercised; by successive corrections of error, and by being habituated to the true and right; by what, if they had a moral character, we should call temptations—by what we may describe as trying and proving, and by other terms alike employed in treating of both topics. The eye of the infant is imposed upon by a thousand fallacies. The sight which measures distance well must, to acquire its accuracy, have resisted many illusions. Mental progress

is a continual overcoming of difficulties. All our faculties begin with trial and error. And such is our moral history: it is the detection of delusions—the looking beyond external appearances—the becoming wise by experience—the gathering of strength by one successful effort for a greater effort—the taking of warning by failure—the persevering in the right, once ascertained, even unto the end.

The second and third chapters of the book of Genesis, whatever their origin, and whatever doctrinal absurdities may have been deduced from them, are a profound allegory, and full of truth and wisdom. The writer's notions of the providence and plan of the Creator accord with the view we have been taking. Why were not the first parents of the human race left in a state of ignorant innocence? Why had they not their garden with no forbidden tree? Because such a condition must have been stationary, and at a very low point of moral worth. Had they and their posterity so remained, there would not have been guilt, there would have been harmlessness; there could not have been any thing deserving the name of virtue; there could have been no such heroic and ever-memorable faith as that of Abraham; there could not have been the meek and dignified patience of Moses the legislator; there could not have been the glorious and quenchless zeal of Paul the apostle; there could not have been the self-devoted love of Christ the Saviour. Had a state without temptation existed, and been perpetuated, humanity would only have been a little above the brutes, instead of becoming but a little lower than the angels. But God's plan from the first was to try men's hearts, and purify and expand them by trial. Thus only could humanity best bear his image. And as the temptations of society could not then exist, the writer represents a positive prohibition as issued for the very purpose of constituting life a state of probation.

The New Testament as well as the Old begins with a temptation. As Adam was tried, so was Christ. But the event was very different. The one indicated the commencement of a plan of probation, the other exhibited the results of that plan. Without such trial, Adam in paradise would have been the perfection of humanity—a poor and worthless being compared with Christ, who was the perfection of humanity as formed by it. The diversities in the

two temptations are all characteristic. The one was that of an untaught, untrained, unexercised man; the other that of one formed by Providence, taught in the school of human society, of personal experience, and of the word of God. The one trial was a mere appeal to the senses; the other involved also the higher principles of our nature, the ambition of temporal sovereignty, and the yet loftier prize of spiritual domination. It was fitting the first should fail, that so a system of probation might be established; it was fitting the last should triumph, that we might see the grace and wisdom of that system, and to what glory and exaltation God thereby will conduct humanity. For this is what we behold in Christ. He was tempted for our succour in temptation. He was made perfect through sufferings, that he might be our pattern of perfection; the exhibition of our ultimate destiny; the object of our present aspirations; the mark at which we should aim; the standard by which we should try ourselves; the first-born among many brethren; the leader of our upward course. And seeing that he is so, "let us lay aside every weight, and the sin that doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus."

These considerations may teach a more judicious procedure than is sometimes practised with young persons. It is a vain attempt to try to keep them out of all temptation. You cannot do it. Temptations are too numerous and subtle for all your vigilance. And if you could, what would follow? That you would only have formed a negative and feeble character, which would probably take the first evil impression after your influence was withdrawn. And withdrawn it some day must be. Do not make temptations for them; but let them gradually be exposed to trials of their principles while there is the parental or friendly eye to watch, the parental or friendly hand to shield, and heart to care for them. The needless prolongation of authority, and an injudicious sternness towards excusable failings, have done the young at least as much harm as the opposite extreme of criminal indifference or criminal indulgence. Watch over them, for you must render an account. But remember, that the best account you can render is, that you prepared them for the self-acquisition of that moral strength by which alone they can

acquit themselves well of their own personal responsibility.

We should learn, too, the importance of every resistance to temptation, inasmuch as every resistance, if successful, augments our moral strength; and if unsuccessful, tends to its destruction. The clear and bright hopes of heaven which bless a virtuous old age are won, not by single efforts, but by repeated victories; the power of evil still diminishing, the power of resistance still increasing, till the individual is strong in faith, giving glory to God. And thus may "the trial of your faith," including in that term every Christian grace, "being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, be found unto praise and honour and glory at the appearing of Jesus Christ."

It is only in the characters of the good that we behold, here, the genuine results of the plan of Divine Providence. The scripture applies similar imagery to futurity. The trials of the righteous, the future punishments of the wicked, are both pictured by the fire which seems to destroy, but which really purifies. Oh, be such its influence; that thus the Lord who trieth the hearts may finally cleanse all hearts from every impurity, mould them into the likeness of his own moral image, fill them with the love of his own infinite excellence, and bless them with his own everlasting blessing!

Sermon XVIII.—Sabbatical Observances.

"The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the sabbath" (Mark ii. 27).

It is true both in a literal and in a spiritual sense that man on the earth has always looked up to heaven. He has felt the need of a power above for his guidance and protection, and desired to obey its will, that it might realise his expectations. He has always been ready to find, moreover, that this power manifested its will by positive injunctions, requiring external obedience: thus rendering it more easy and tangible than the moral duties which demand reflection and feeling; and giving him with more facility the consciousness of merit, and the assurance of

recompense. The lesson has been learned on earth much oftener than it was ever taught from heaven; and while one set of positive institutions, imposed on one people for a limited duration, may claim a real divine authority, observances have been multiplied and perpetuated till they have often threatened to overwhelm a rational devotion and a beneficent morality beneath a monstrous pile of superstitions. And it has happened that the looking up to heaven, in this sense, has not been unconnected with the results of literally gazing upon the material heavens. It is said, in the Mosaic theory of creation, that "God made lights in the firmament of the heaven, to divide the day from the night, and be for signs and for seasons, and for days and for years." And soon did men learn to apply this celestial machinery to the measurement of time. The sun guided them to the year, and the moon to the month. But other measurement was needed. Months were a good subdivision of the year, especially aided by the regularly returning seasons for an intermediate quantity; but days were too minute and numerous a subdivision of the month. An intermediate quantity was wanted there. And where was it found? Most probably in what till recent times was believed to be the number of the planets, and which was known in ancient Egypt. The days were clustered into sevens. The week became a measure of time as common as the month and the year. Man was still guided by the heavens. His natural science and his religious speculations went hand in hand. Seven was made a sacred number. Philosophy calculated by it; astrology predicted by it; and superstition by it soothed or terrified. Over all the earth there were years, months, and weeks; and every where a superstition, which was growing darker and darker, working through them upon men's souls; till Moses was prompted of God to look back through the spiritual evil to the physical good, and to correct the one, and to improve and exalt the other into a spiritual good, by the institution of the Jewish sabbath.

That was an era in the history of humanity. In the records of the ancient heathen world, we find the numbering of the days by sevens, and the supposed sacredness of the number seven; but we find no sabbath. There was no weekly return of a day of purification for the polluted,

of instruction for the ignorant, of festival for the torpid, and of rest for the weary. This "law was given by Moses," *i. e.* by the God from whom he had his mission. For the sabbath was made *for* man, not *by* man. It was a positive institution, founded on a physical fact, but most abundant in mental and moral blessings.

By the theory of a six days' creation, and a divine rest on the seventh day, the God of nature is identified with the God of Israel. We are taught the harmony of the natural and the supernatural. They are inwoven as portions of one great plan. But of a patriarchal sabbath there are no indications. Of an institution, there is no record anterior to Moses. *Then*, the appointment was part of a system. The sabbath was a sign of the Jewish covenant. It indicated a dispensation of outward observance and positive obligation. It was needful for the Israelites thus to learn devotion, till ripened for the spirituality of Christian worship. It was needful thus to learn obedience, till matured for the perfect law of liberty, where morality is the application of the principle of benevolence. The mental improvement of a day must be voluntary; the abstinence from labour may be enforced. They had not only their weekly sabbath, but their sabbatical year. During that year the land was to remain untilled. Both were symbols of their condition. They were the badges of a system in which a special providence rewarded or punished ceremonial obedience or its neglect. They belonged to a system of preparation for better things to come, when Christ should do with it as Moses had done with anterior religions,—look through it to original principles, stay the corruption, and elicit a higher kind of good.

The Jewish sabbath passed away with Judaism and its routine of ceremonies. All were destroyed in the destruction of their temple. Christ consecrated no day by formal appointment. Nor did his apostles. But the skyey influences were yet over the world. Jews and Gentiles reckoned their weeks of seven days. Christ had risen on the first day of the week. It was *the Lord's day*. Its distinction from the rest by Christians for the social purposes of their religion was natural, voluntary, universal. They were "in the spirit on the Lord's day;" it summoned them to their feasts of love and songs of praise.

When Constantine bent before the cross, civil polity blended with religious feeling, and gave political sanction to the day. It had now fallen into the hands of authority; that of the emperor was obtained, that of the Deity was claimed; a confusion of the Lord's day with the Jewish sabbath began, and the world is yet the worse for superstitions from that time engendered and multiplied.

The identification of the Lord's day with the Jewish sabbath is both fallacious and pernicious.

The ten commandments, on the fourth of which the sabbatical observance of one day in the week is commonly rested, were the foundation of the Jewish code. They were the summary, or rather the elemental principles, of God's covenant with Israel. Moses was never commissioned of heaven to be a universal instructor or universal legislator. That was reserved for Christ. The mission of Moses was to the Jews, and to them alone. The principles condensed in the ten commandments were wrought out in the whole array of enactments which occupy so large a portion of the Pentateuch. If one be obligatory, so are all. They stand on the same ground. If they enforce the sabbatical observance of the seventh day, they also enforced that of the seventh year, when no Jew was to till his land. It is plain that we have only to do with that code as matter of history. Whatever we are bound to do which is there, we are bound to do by obligation derived from a different source. We must go back to nature, or forward to Christianity. We commit the very blunder against which Paul warned the Gentile Christians, and against which he wrote so much, and so earnestly. That whole system of ceremony is swept away. Nothing of Judaism remains, but the devotion and morality which were embodied in it; which in their nature are everlasting; and which remain and are obligatory, not because they were incorporated in Judaism, but because they *are* devotion and morality, the end of man's being, the perfection of his nature, the essence of his happiness.

A transfer of the obligation of the seventh day to the first, or a new institution for the first, of the same nature, is altogether fictitious. Nothing of the kind is narrated in the New Testament. The book of Acts and the Epistles show that the first Christians assembled on that day; but not *instead* of the old sabbath. Those of them who were

Jews always observed that, while the temple stood. The Gentile Christians had no day free from labour till the time of Constantine. Their meeting was often in the evening, when the business of the day was done. Besides, primitive practice does not constitute a divine institution. We see in Judaism what formality and precision are requisite for that. Where all is positive, all must be prescribed. There is nothing of this kind in relation to the Lord's day. The silence of Christ and the apostles, and the merely incidental notice preserved of the fact that the disciples used to meet on the Lord's day, clearly show that it was a voluntary observance.

Now, is it not pernicious that something like a pious fraud should be practised in the use continually made of the fourth commandment? If it be not obligatory, why make the child and the adult repeat it as the ground of duty? If it be, then observe it on the day commanded. It is not less broken, being a positive institute, by observance on another day, than by not being observed at all. The command was not to observe one day in seven, but *the seventh day*. Observe it, too, as the Jews were bound to observe it. In these particulars how inconsistent are modern Sabbatarians! Oh, these are the things which, when the young and ignorant begin to reflect, disgust them with religion, and make them hastily conclude that every thing so called is of the same character! This Sabbatarianism is a trap for consciences. It generates sin. The culprits who so often confess that their crimes commenced with sabbath-breaking should make the ministers of religion reflect on what they are doing. Persuade a man that that was a great offence against God which he did without any guilty thought or purpose, and you degrade his mind, and prepare it for violating the laws of morality. It is pernicious that any matter of ceremony should be elevated as this has been above the duties of justice and kindness. It sends people's thoughts and conscientiousness in the wrong direction. It elevates passive stupidity into righteousness, and condemns active usefulness as impiety. It misrepresents God. For the time and place, where and during which the sabbath was of his appointment, it was not an arbitrary exaction by him of a portion of men's time—no such thing; it was appointed because, in the then state of

the world, such an institution had its work to do in advancing the progress of humanity; it was made for man. It was part of that dispensation to which the world must ever owe so much. It was founded on that principle of utility which now man has to apply for himself. It was ordained for that period by God, the teacher of his rational children; not enforced in perpetuity by a supposed God, the arbitrary despot of ceremonial slaves. It is good that the gospel should be vindicated from this kind of misrepresentation.

And now, dismissing men's reveries and mistakes and superstitions, let us come to the rational and useful view of this matter, and inquire into the true grounds of our own practice, which I take to be that of a voluntary separation of one day in seven, the first day of the week, for moral, intellectual, and Christian purposes. There are three motives to such a practice: the first, civil or political; the second, moral or religious; and the third, peculiarly Christian. They all draw in the same direction. It is good that, one day in seven, there should be a cessation of labour; it is good that, one day in seven, reflective people should meet together for the purposes of public worship and instruction; and it is good that this day should be a day so deeply interesting to us as Christians, so associated with the most momentous of all facts, so rich in past recollections and future hopes, as that day of the week on which Jesus rose from the dead.

1. It is good that, one day in seven, labour should be suspended. There is a social, civil, political expediency in the recurrence of a day of rest at about that interval. A community has a right to make such a regulation for the advantage of its members. A government has a right to enforce it with the powers of government. Those powers have rarely been more usefully exerted. I do not mean that a government should ordain its religious consecration. I deny the right of human authority for religious legislation. Its assumption is a usurpation. And still worse than the direct assertion of such a claim is the hypocrisy of endeavouring to procure reverence for its enactments by investing them with a fictitious divine authority. But the simple question of cessation from labour is strictly within the province of civil government. Moreover, if put

on this ground, such exceptions may be made, or tolerated, as common convenience requires. The right of regulation extends over the whole and all its parts. The law of rest, so far as we are now considering it, is properly a human law, and a wise and beneficent one. It is a happy immunity for all industrious classes,—the master's best solace, and the workman's best protection. What would the condition of the poor be, if the day of rest were abolished?—at least where there is a large population, and an eager competition for work. They would be crushed to the very earth. Incessant toil would extinguish the mental light that is in them, and wear out the more rapidly their physical strength. They would not earn the more. Competition would keep down their own portion of the produce of their labour to that which would just enable them to subsist. They would still earn only their daily bread by the sweat of their brow; but they would be seven days earning it, instead of six. Unvaried and unbroken toil is brutalising. Even the provision for mere cessation is something for rationality, something for political freedom, something for morality. Without it, labourers would go far back towards the state of slavery. It is a breach in their prison-wall which lets in the light of intelligence. On this ground, as a public institution, let it stand. Let there be no interference with conscience. Let there be no pretensions of divine authority. Let it be law for the public good, "without partiality and without hypocrisy." When Moses instituted the Jewish sabbath, divine authority was interposing to break the power of superstition, and to lead men on, till the dictate of power should become the impulse of reason. Be his memory blessed as God's agent for human good; but not honoured by ill-timed imitation and unwarranted pretension. Ever may the right of the poor, and the good of all, be consecrated by the legislative sanction of a day of rest!

2. I come to the moral or religious motive; and here we must look to a different set of persons. We have shown the foundation on which the state should act; there is one equally broad and firm for the religionist, for the church. How are the truths of religion to be made known; how its social worship practised; how its duties enforced on the conscience; how its consolations ministered to the dis-

tressed; how its spirit excited to an energy which shall influence the heart and life; how its dominion extended over mankind,—but by the stated assembling of ourselves together, and inviting others to join us; and thus encouraging one another to love and to good works? We must have periodical meetings, and frequent ones. If men have to do so much for the physical support of themselves and families that they cannot be called together more frequently than once in seven days, they ought not, for the very reason that they are so deeply involved and so intensely occupied in such matters, to be called together seldomer than that. Did the laws of the land legitimate unceasing labour through the day, at least the evening should be seized and redeemed at such an interval. This was what the Christians did, till the legislation of Imperial Rome enabled them to take the day. Such we may infer was the meeting at Troas, where Paul prolonged his speech till midnight, and their subsequent conversation—a farewell one, as they all knew—held on till the break of day. We cannot give less than this to purposes so important. Man's strength would fail in his worldly conflict, and his spirit faint within him, without this ever-recurring stimulus. He cannot be wholly ignorant, when once a week knowledge is proffered to his mind. He cannot be wholly animal, when every week brings *one* appeal to what is higher and better in his nature. He cannot be wholly selfish, when every week reminds him of his neighbour, and draws around men the bond of fraternity. He cannot sink into an unbroken dream of this world, when the very lights of heaven which measure his days cease not to bring him tidings of a world to come. He cannot be entirely without God in the world, when every week begins with the acknowledgment of Him who made the world, rules it by his providence, blesses it by his grace, and promises by his word immortality to its inhabitants. He who appreciates these mercies, for himself and others, will welcome the day of political rest as the day of religious exercises and instruction. He will rejoice to hear and to say, "Come now, and let us go up unto the house of the Lord." How superior is the voluntary association, thus redeeming the time, to that of the Jewish people in the authoritative restriction of their sabbath! Without that, as a preli-

minary, this might never have been; but the letter is dead now that the spirit hath given life. Religionists thus reasoning and acting, think not of things to be abstained from, but of things to be done. Their consciences are not beset with snares, and only engaged in the tremulous avoidance of what may be sinful—made so, not by its nature, but by positive appointment; — they go straightforward to the work of improvement. To be so employed is ever man's best and happiest course. It is not by being afraid all the day that this or that (innocent at other times) may be a desecration and a sin, and may make God angry, that good is realised. It is by pursuing the object. It is by seeking instruction. It is by cultivating devotional feeling. It is by entering into the very spirit of religious observances. It is by coming with full purpose of heart to our professed and honest aim. This will realise the end most effectually. It will make the Sunday, in the thoughts and feelings it produces during the week, as a fountain of living and running waters, sparkling in the sun, and fertilising the earth, and hastening on their course in activity, and purity, and music, and gladness; while the ceremonial sabbath is but a standing pool, neither reflecting the sun nor enriching the ground, and proud of its unwholesome torpidity of dark corruption. The angel must descend from heaven to trouble such waters before they have any healing power. Heaven is the Christian's eternal sabbath; but the rest of heaven is the activity of benevolence.

3. To the civil and the religious principle I said that another must be added, peculiarly Christian. It is well that the day of cessation from toil which the community requires, and the day of instruction and worship which religion requires, should coincide; that they should be the same day. Best of all is it that that day should be the day which proclaimed immortality to mankind by the resurrection of Christ. The very fact does something of that day's holy work upon the heart. The very fact is good for faith and hope. Every rising of that sun may make itself welcome to the eyes of those who are weary and heavy laden with this world's cares, for it ushers in the day of rest that tells them of a future world of rest. Every rising of that sun should beam a joyous light upon the eyes of him who is bewildered in perplexities and doubts, for it

calls attention to the truths which are the distracted soul's best guidance, directing to "the true light that lighteth every man that cometh into the world." Every rising of that sun is welcome to the aspirant after higher attainments and purer joys than those of earth, for it is the day of *his* revival who ascended to heaven as our forerunner. The rising of that sun is new life to those that mourn; it dawns in hope upon their sorrow, and tells them of each loved and lost one too, "he is not here, he is risen." The associations of the Jewish sabbath were but with creation, these are with redemption; they were supported by a theory, these cling around a fact; they were of the past, this is of the future; they were of life, this is of immortality. Yes, this is the day when society should tell the sons of toil to rest. Yes, this is the day when religion should call the sons and daughters of God to assemble in their Father's house. Yes, this is the day when the gospel should assert its power, and unfold its promises, and extend its triumphs and its blessings. There is propriety, there is reason, there is justice, there is benevolence, there is religion, in the selection, and its voluntary employment. It was made for man; this bearing of varied motives all on one point, it is good for him to feel; and the obligation it asserts is in the blessings it confers.

Christ's manner of speaking of the sabbath, and of acting upon it, was admirably adapted to accomplish the transition he contemplated from the religion of ceremony to that of spirituality. He often chose it for the time of miracle. That was "work" to which even they could not consistently object; for the power was of God, and his reply was ready, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." He abolished not formally the Mosaic sabbath; he knew Providence was about to do that, by the dreadful catastrophe soon to come upon Judæa. He provided that, when it should pass away, there should be something purer, simpler, and better to supply its place. It ill becomes his followers to go back towards what Paul called "beggarly elements," things "passing away;" they should enter into the spirit of the gospel, and rise from slavish ceremony and superstitious observance to rationality and utility; regarding the reformation and elevation of the human character and the multiplication of human happi-

ness as the great end of all; and all actions, exercises, instructions, assemblings, as the means,—the scaffolding of the building, the top stone of which shall at length be brought forth with joy, angels shouting, Grace, grace, unto it. And so shall be erected and perfected our house of God eternal in the heavens.

Sermon XIX.—Religious Reformation.

"Thus saith the Lord, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths, where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls" (Jer. vi. 16).

Although divine revelation is so constituted as to accommodate itself to the progress of the human mind,—so as to expand with the expansion of intellect, and, like an exhaustless mine of truth, to yield the more richly the more of talent and of industry are brought to work on its resources,—yet is it also true, and completely consistent, that its principles and spirit were perfect from the first and at the first; it is not in them, but in their applications and results, that the accommodation takes place to man's advancement; and a frequent appeal to them is needful to stem the course of the errors and corruptions which obtain from time to time. As to the first and fundamental principles of faith and conduct, our inquiry must be for the old paths; they alone are the good ways which will lead to a safe rest for our souls. And the antiquity to which we look should be the highest. Not the old ways of this or that sect or church, but of religion itself, and its authorised teachers, of Moses and Christ, of prophets and apostles, as delineated in the sacred scriptures. This is the only antiquity entitled to authority. "To the law and the testimony,"—there is the rule, which must show us whether we have the true light in us, or are bewildered in error and stumbling in darkness.

This appeal we are accustomed to make as to the differences of doctrine between ourselves and the rest of the Christian world. I think it becomes us to make that appeal at all proper times and in all proper ways; from the press and from the pulpit; to make it frequently, earnestly, and zealously. Our allegiance to the cause of knowledge and

of truth demands it of us; and the vindication of our conduct in doing so is, to my mind, complete and satisfactory.

But even if it were not so, there is another way in which our zeal is equally required, and where the duties and difficulties which some feel about efforts which have truth, abstractedly considered, for their object, can have no place. The departure from the doctrinal verity of the gospel is not greater than that from the practical spirit. The two are connected; zeal is justified by either; but as in relation to the latter it rests on grounds which are universally undeniable, its obligations ought to be universally admitted, and its power universally felt and exhibited.

To this I would now draw your attention; I would show you how much there is, in the Christian world, besides such doctrines as those of the Trinity, satisfaction, eternal torment, and the like, which needs correction; how much there is which is practically wrong, mischievous, and melancholy; how much there is which will not bear the test, but which should nevertheless be brought to the test, of primitive Christianity; how much which calls on us, according to the opportunities of our several stations, for active, liberal, and persevering coöperation.

If it be said that, in the great work of reformation, we had better look to ourselves than to others, I say so too. It is our first concern that our own hearts be right in the sight of God. Of this we should never, never lose sight; and God grant us grace to pursue it so wisely and steadily as to accomplish the object, to our souls' salvation. But I say too, that looking to ourselves includes looking occasionally to others. I say that we do *not* look to ourselves effectually, if we allow indifference as to the prevalence in society of truly Christian modes of feeling and action. I say that our consciences are misinformed, sluggish, or unfaithful, if they allow us to stand tamely by, and not exert ourselves, nor encourage and strengthen others in exertion, for aiding the triumph over the opposite feelings of those sentiments of liberty and liberality, of holiness, love, and hope, which constitute the spirit of the gospel. Here the concerns of others are our own concerns, as the honest, consistent, and faithful followers of Christ.

I shall now therefore bring into contrast with the genuine spirit of Christianity some of the practical evils

which prevail among professed Christians, and against which we should bear our unswerving testimony.

The secularising of Christianity, the making of it a kingdom of this world, the blending and mixing up of its doctrines and worship with political considerations, is not one of the old ways in which the primitive Christians walked. The simplicity and spirituality of the gospel cannot be impaired or obscured without mischief. Let princes and potentates, let magistrates and senators, do it reverence; it deserves and demands their reverence; their personal and official, their public and their private homage; in itself and in the persons of its consistent professors;—but let them not affect to be its patrons. The only righteous and useful establishment of Christianity by law, is the conducting of legislation on Christian principles; it is the upholding of justice and mercy; it is the direction of all power to the public good; it is the preservation of the weak from the oppression of the strong; it is the assertion of the rights and the advancement of the interests of humanity; it is the due apportionment of punishment to crime, so that there is only so much suffering inflicted as is needful to protect the innocent, and such suffering as best tends to amend the guilty: it is the securing to all of full liberty of speech and worship, and holding an even balance between contending parties: this, and this alone, is an establishment of Christianity consistent with Christianity. Now is it not an evil, and a crying evil, that there should ever be such a political adoption of the gospel as that its ministry is brought into suspicion of subserviency to earthly greatness, and of being pursued merely as a lucrative and honourable avocation; as that its profession has annexed to it secular advantages; as that prejudice is created against its evidences by blending them with the dictates of legal authority; and as that free inquiry into its truths is obstructed by the national imposition of certain formularies? Are we not bound to tell the Christian world that all this is innovation and corruption? that these are not the old ways of Christians, but a devious path down a slippery steep, where, though gold may glitter by the way, Religion is in sore peril of being soiled and crippled? She loses her good name. She becomes confounded with the tricks by which men have sought to blindfold their fellow-

men that they might mislead and plunder them. She loses her independence, and is obliged to accept the appointments of a master in her own household, and to do a master's bidding. She has to learn the language of courts, and loses her simplicity of speech and manner. She loses the credit of her honest disciples, whose good works would adorn her doctrine, but who are lost in a crowd of hereditary, careless, hypocritical, or unthinking, and merely nominal professors. She appears like a thing of earth, and not a heavenly visitant. Oh, not thus should the glorious gospel of the grace of God be exhibited! We should put in contrast with it that unworldly kingdom of Christ which is not meat and drink, but righteousness and peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit. We should point to the New-Testament annals of that band of brothers who were first called by it out of the world, and who, like their Master, were not of the world. We should imbibe their spirit, and uphold their testimony, and act upon their principles, and pursue their objects. We should keep the holy name of our religion, as we should keep our own souls, unspotted from the world.

There is another practical evil, yet more extended, for spiritual despotism has a wider and more withering influence than even political servility: I mean the suppression or obstruction of that liberty of thought and speech on religious matters which the first Christians possessed, which the apostles sanctioned, and which our great Master himself authorised, employed, and appealed to. To promote a fearless range of mind, and a frank manliness of speech, was one of the objects of the gospel, as it is to human character one of the surest safeguards of worth and means of excellence. To cherish them is to provide for a larger development of the mental and moral faculties of our nature than can in any other way be attained. But what can be more discouraged than are these by modern religionists? Why, if avowed difference from the avowed notions of the rest brings only the penalty of exclusion from a voluntary society, professedly Christian, it is pernicious enough. And this is the lightest form of the prohibition which is issued by every petty aspirant for sectarian domination. Hence in our country there is scarcely such a thing as individuality of religious opinion. People think

in parties. Bodies of men have creeds of their own formation; but of the members—just as if they were literally members—the only office is mechanically to obey the dictates of a ruling intellect and will. If they dare to think for themselves, they are cut off, and cast off, to find some other frame into which they may be fitted, and where they may be made alike subservient. Tell where a man worships, and you also tell what he would answer to this or that question of doctrine, and even how he will interpret this or that text of scripture. It is as if minds were cast in a mould, and faiths furnished wholesale, of the same size and pattern, like uniforms or liveries. Is this a state of things for intellect to grow in, or can souls be ripened under these conflicting, chilling, and blighting influences? Let Trinitarianism, or Unitarianism, or any other *ism*, be true or false; but let every Christian, without let or hindrance, be free, be stimulated to exercise his mind, and to declare his mind, on those or any other tenets which are in the word of God, or which claim to be there. It is for his own benefit, it is for the benefit of the world, that he should. "Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind." That is the gospel law of uniformity; the only uniformity which is absolutely imperative. Did it but prevail, how speedily and gloriously would truth emerge from amid the multitudinous clouds of error, scattering them hither and thither, and irradiating a world they had so long obscured and terrified! Nor would even this grand result be the grandest result that would follow. That would be the advancement of the human mind; the maturing of individual intellect and character. Babes in Christ would grow up into strong men, instead of dwindling in everlasting infancy, bound in everlasting leading-strings. Here, then, is a ground of zeal for the Christian philanthropist and the Christian philosopher, which assumes the truth of no particular faith, the importance of no particular doctrine, the merits of no particular society, but which simply aims at restoring to God's disinherited children their alienated mental rights, and practically emancipating them with the liberty wherewith Christ, in the spirit of his gospel, has made them free.

An enormous practical evil may be indicated in the notions of conversion which are very commonly inculcated.

Sinners are preached to in the hope of producing an immediate change in their hearts, before which they are totally corrupt, and after which they are represented as the sure inheritors of heaven, were death that instant to close their probation. This is a snare for souls, a fearful delusion, which the friends of man and of goodness cannot contemplate without being moved to pity and to zeal. What can be worse than to tell one who has been an habitual violator of the laws of God, perhaps of those of his country, that by any such momentary operation his sins can be blotted out? The raptures of a poor deceived creature in that awful state are enough to make a wise man mad, and a good man melancholy. Think of the profanation of religion which such scenes imply; and the adoption of its purest and noblest expressions, of the language of its holiest prophets and apostles in their closest communings with Heaven and their own hearts, by those who can have no participation in their holy and elevated sentiments, and who stain what they utter by the defilement and debasement of their own minds and characters. Think of the notions of heaven thus propagated through society. Think of the associates assigned to the spirits of just men made perfect, associates whose forced companionship here would be the most loathsome infliction that tyranny could devise. What must be the state for whose enjoyments such converts are instantaneously qualified? Think of the prospect of impunity thus held out to transgression—how the force of religion is enfeebled; the necessity of reformation indefinitely postponed; and judgment to come made a form and a mockery from which the repentance of an instant may bear the culprit harmless, and carry him through triumphantly;—and, above all, think how the notion of morality, of goodness, of righteousness, is thereby lowered and debased. What is the Christian character worth if it may be thus attained? But little, either in itself or to society. It ceases to be that pure and glorious object which has called forth the loftiest aspirations of the loftiest minds; which made apostles press forward to something yet far before them; which the longest life of moral labour did but advance towards by a gradual and progressive realisation; and which, though to be striven for by every Christian, has but one immaculate exhibition, in the cha-

racter of Christ. Here is no mere theory at stake. Here is no barren critical disputation. Here is no dark doctrinal discussion. It is the very principle of moral goodness, which demands exertion to preserve it unsullied, to uphold its power, and to vindicate the dignity assigned to it alike by the dictates of nature and by the declarations of the gospel. An earnest desire and struggle for this is not party spirit; it is not sectarian zeal; it is being "zealously affected," not merely "for a good thing," but for goodness itself.

Another great blessing to society, which the prevalence of rational and liberal principles of religion would confer, would be the demolition of that prejudice and bigotry which make so many really devout people judge unkindly, and think disparagingly, of the characters and moral state of those who differ from them on points of doctrine. This too is an evil of large amount and dark malignity. It is a constant and widely-extended and aggravated act of injustice. For that honesty of profession, which is a moral obligation and a Christian duty, the rejecter of popular doctrines is deprived of the fair estimation and the kindly feelings to which he is righteously entitled. He does not rank where he ought to rank in good men's thoughts and good men's hearts. He is deprived of a favourable opinion due to his deserts, which is as unjust as if he were deprived of property accumulated by his exertions. Prejudice will not render "honour to whom honour is due," gratitude to whom gratitude, affection to whom affection, is due. Could these things be represented by money, the withholding of them would be a tangible offence, which the law would put down. They cannot be so represented; they are infinitely more precious—the injustice is so much the more grievous; but the redress is only in the diffusion of liberality. Nor is the evil less to the perpetrator than to the object. Moral wrong is never committed with impunity. Prejudice excludes mental light. Bigotry is at least partial blindness, and to it is "knowledge at one entrance quite shut out." And while it darkens the mind, it cripples the affections. A thousand kindly feelings are sacrificed to narrowness and bitterness. Christianity is disgraced. Men do not know that God sent Christ, as he prayed they might, by the fact that his disciples love one another.

Apostolic authority is levelled before sectarian bigotry. The new commandment of Christ is already made obsolete by the newer decree of dogmatical intolerance. The harmony and power of combined exertions for purposes of common utility are impaired and frittered away. There is alike an invasion of the comfort of social intercourse and the energy of public beneficence. Does not all this imperatively require amendment? Is not its amendment a lawful object of Christian zeal? In pursuing it, are we not in the path of duty? Yes; as much in that of moral and religious duty as in our own personal worship and meditations. Does it not combine with them, and are we not saving ourselves when we are benefiting others? If it was worth a divine interposition to give the apostle Peter a clear and heartfelt perception of the truth, that "in every nation he that feareth God, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of him," it must certainly be worth some human zeal, sacrifice, and effort to bring home that truth to the millions of souls which are bound up in the belief of the exclusive excellence of the little faction to which they belong. Here is an object far superior to many to which philanthropists, whom the world worthily holds in reverence, have consecrated all their years, and devoted all their powers, and even sacrificed their lives.

I shall mention but one more topic, and that is the displacing of the gloomy views in religion which too much abound, by those which, as they are more Christian in their origin, are more—oh, how much more!—productive of happiness in their influences. There is an immense sum of suffering in the world resulting from misrepresentations of the Divine character and government. The spirit of love, as the great spring of action, is too commonly displaced by that of fear; and most true is the brief and emphatic assertion of the apostle John, that "fear hath torment." In some systems, men are terrified into religion, and terrified by religion, and they look up to God with terror, and forward to futurity with terror. Their duty is servility; their motive, the apprehension of punishment; and their heaven, an escape from hell. And those whose views are brightest for themselves have still so dreadful a prospect for others, for a reprobated world, as only leaves the alternative of selfish indifference or heart-

corroding anguish. To such interpretations of Christianity our simpler and brighter views of it bear the same relative character of *gospel*, or glad tidings, which Christianity itself did to a benighted world. They are light in the soul's darkness, freedom to mental captivity, and the proclamation of a sabbath jubilee for the rational creation. What better blessing can be sent abroad than hope, a generous hope, for humanity itself? What can extend and elevate the affections like the anticipation of a final universal redemption? We can scarcely confer a greater benefit on any good man than to open his ears to hear that sound *for all*, which he has only listened to as a promise for a selected portion of the human race, even though in that portion *he* was included. It is like being present at the descent of an angel from heaven, proclaiming, "Behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people; for unto you"—you, mankind, the human race—"is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord;" and joining with all the past and present and future generations of the world, earth's nations, and the "multitude of the heavenly host," in the response of glory to God and love to man.

Away, then, with the notion that there is nothing moral, nothing practical, nothing which affects men's hearts and happiness, at stake in the religious differences which exist. Even if it could not be shown of any peculiar doctrines that they are God's truth, and therefore worthy of man's earnest efforts for their dissemination, there is still ample inducement for benevolent and energetic exertion. But there are great and simple truths, though long obscured, of which this can be shown; and the combination, mental and moral, is one which should leave no hesitation in our minds, no lukewarmness in our hearts, no inconsistency in our conduct. It is our clearest duty, our best interest, our noblest aim, our highest happiness, to "serve God with our spirits in the gospel of his Son;" to advance Christ's spiritual kingdom; and by rightly striving to advance that in others, we also advance it in our own hearts; nor can we establish its full dominion in our own hearts while we are indifferent to its extension around us. Let us, then, pursue conjointly what the spirit of the gospel declares cannot

be sundered. It is said of the all-perfect God, that "he is good, and does good continually." Nor can we really *be* good without doing good; or do good, on Christian principles, without being good. By loving our neighbour as ourselves, we work out his benefit and our own salvation.

Sermon XX.—Probation and Judgment.

"But after this (death) the judgment" (Hebrews ix. 27).

To any one who should open the New Testament for the first time, and whose eye should fall on this passage, it would seem a very bold assertion. Man knows not what the morrow may bring forth. The changes of life are continually baffling his calculations. He frequently finds himself in circumstances the imagination of which, a few months or years before, would have been dismissed as a wild and most incredible romance. And yet, here is one who assumes to tell us, not what will come after this week or year, but after this life itself shall have closed; and who affirms that, when we shall have been removed from all communication with the world in which we live, and the beings by whom we are surrounded; that when we shall have reached what seems to our senses and experience the final close of our existence,—that after this will come the judgment!

But the notion of boldness vanishes when further examination shows the writer's authority. He was a disciple of the man of inspiration, the man of miracle, the man of the resurrection, Jesus Christ. He had learned this after-death fact from one who was in an after-death existence. This truth of futurity was learned from the commissioned revealer of futurity. It comes through him to the world from the author of life and death, the giver of time, the possessor of eternity. This assertion is not pretence, but reality; not assumption, but docility; not pride, but benevolence. In the name of Him who had risen from the dead, he repeats the prediction that to all, after death, should come the judgment.

And while the simple and conclusive evidence of historical fact had thus furnished authority for the declaration,

and divested it of all that would have looked like arrogance, it may be further observed, that it is not so devoid of indications and corroborations in the course of events in this life as most would perhaps at first suppose. Those take but a very imperfect view of the rationale of the subject who look only at the dead and dissolving body, though they may watch it from senselessness to decomposition, see it resolving into its original elements, and those elements entering into new combinations,—springing up in vegetation, or becoming again incorporated in some other form of animal existence. The voice of nature utters oracles from other places besides the tomb. Ill would he write the history even of the corn-field who should only look at it after the seed was sown, and before that seed had sprung up; and who, on the strength of his negative observation, should assert that after winter would come no spring. The experience of another year, it may be said, would correct his error. True; and therefore, it should not be hastily concluded that the other error will not be corrected by the experience of another life. But I think that, could the case be supposed for a moment, the acute observer of a single year of vegetation would have some reason to anticipate,—not very distinctly, perhaps,—but some reason to anticipate that what he saw was not all; that something else was to happen; that he was not in the midst of a scene of mere destruction. And so I think also, that besides its proof of fact, of revelation, and of miracle, the assertion in the text is not unsupported by what may be noticed in the world around us and within us; but that there are various considerations which give it a degree of rationality and probability. It is worth while to observe these. They may recommend the doctrine itself to those who demur to the conclusiveness of the proofs on which it is rested by Christianity. They may react upon the evidences of the gospel, and dispose the mind more readily to admit proof of a truth whose harmony with reason and fact has been evinced to it previously. And the correspondences which we are led to trace may be in themselves useful by suggesting various lessons of devout feeling and moral duty.

There is a reasonableness in the tenet that this life is a state of probation, and the next of retribution; because this life is itself made up of a succession of periods which bear

alternately and mutually the relation of trial and of judgment. It is probable that after death comes judgment, because before, long before, death also comes judgment; after each division of our being comes another division which is as a judgment to that which preceded; and as so we go on from the cradle to the grave, it may be anticipated that so we shall go on from time to eternity.

The first world of humanity is the nursery, and the next little world of humanity is the school; the first passing of the child from one to the other is the great event of his short life,—it is going into a new state of being; and the school stands to the nursery in the relation of a season of judgment to one of preparation and probation. The nursery life ends, never to be resumed, and after its termination comes a judgment upon it. The child goes into a society which he was not born into, as he was into that of the family; and the arrangements of which are constituted on a different principle, for a different purpose, and by a different authority. But every acquirement, faculty, disposition of his previous life, *tells* in his new condition, and becomes the source of pleasure or uneasiness. The little tyrant of infancy has to pay for his former domination by learning to endure the control of others. The little idler suffers the penalty of shame for his comparative backwardness. Young kindness attracts kindness for its appropriate recompense, and selfishness is sentenced to dislike, and cowardice to scorn. There is a mighty variation of degree in the happiness or suffering which awaits a child at school, as the natural and necessary, but not less retributory, result of its former little life. He takes his stand, according to his desert, as desert is estimated by his comrades. He is no longer shielded by the favouritism or annoyed by the prejudices of the family. If the one has made him assuming, he will be humbled, and that with no slight pain. If the other has made him sullen, he will be ridiculed or shunned. If he has been well trained for the occupation and fellowship of the school, he will find plenty of stimulus and enjoyment. And this judgment becomes in turn a probation, to be followed by another judgment upon it and the character of its influences. The world is to the school what the school is to the nursery. The happiness or misery of manhood are a judgment upon boyhood, as those of boyhood were on

childhood. The scene shifts again into a new state of being. The youth departs the life of the academical world, and is born into that of the business world. Then comes another judgment. The affairs of active and social life soon make retribution felt for the merits or misdeeds of youth. They put to the test the worth of the information he has been accumulating or neglecting. It is soon seen whether it be of the right sort. If not, his ears must often ring and tingle with the world's laugh at his conceit of scholarship. Rank is taken on a new principle; and many of the first are last, and of the last, first. The tastes he has cultivated, the associates he has selected, the principles he has imbibed, the character he has formed,—all are tried by their fitness for this larger and higher world. If the wrong book has been studied, and the wrong faculty developed in the boy, the man must pay the penalty. It will take him a weary while to repair the errors of those years. If his school life of probation has not kept its end in sight, the practical judgment of the world will condemn him to be jostled, cheated, and insulted. Acuteness, observation, useful knowledge, perseverance,—these will be sure of their reward. And so the world passes judgment on the school.

Various alternations may be picked out of the totality of human life which bear a similar relation to one another, and show how this principle pervades existence. Health and sickness are, to each other, probation and judgment. In sickness, men are made to feel accordingly as health has been used or abused. What a poor and pitiable wretch in illness is he whose mind and heart have not been fortified with good principles and feelings! In his impatience, his sullenness, his querulousness; the failure of resources within, which he has not accumulated; the failure of affection from without, which he has not conciliated; the failure of hopes beyond, which he has not acquired: he is judged according to his deeds. And sickness is probation too, as well as judgment. He who improves it, who makes the most of the compulsory retirement which it imposes, as he afterwards goes into the world a wiser and a better man, so will he be in the world a more useful and a happier man. The same thing may be said of solitude and society. He who rightly employs the one has most enjoyment in the other. Those who waste the hours of solitude know nothing of the best and purest pleasure of

society. The triflers of society are condemned to irksomeness in solitude. Religious duties and worldly occupations occur in continual interchange. They follow the same law. There are those who know that those beautiful expressions in the Psalms, of delight in the house of the Lord, are not obsolete emotions, not the exaggeration of poetical diction. They have felt their reality. Their hearts have glowed within them. In prayer, they have prayed; and in praise, they have given thanks to God; and in the truths of religion, they have felt the descent upon their souls of a heavenly spirit, and the growth in their hearts of a spiritual life. It is their reward, in this ever-returning judgment, their sabbath reward for well-spent weeks, for laborious, honourable, and useful days. Nor will the man who honestly endeavours to improve by these services lose his recompense. He is preparing himself for the world, and while in it will find himself above it, the possessor of a peace which it can neither give nor take away. And after all these vicissitudes and alternations comes *old age*, the great earthly judgment upon the occupations of youth and of maturity. A comfortable, an honourable, a happy, and a hopeful old age is no chance bestowment, no mere prize in the lottery of life, no unaccountable accident, divested of all connection with a "foregone conclusion." There are many of whom we can confidently tell long before the time comes, that such an old age will not be theirs. "Their deeds are open beforehand, going to judgment." Oh, what varieties there are in circumstances,—the judgment on former care or mismanagement! Oh, what varieties there are in the capacity which remains for enjoyment,—the fruits of former cultivation or neglect! Oh, what varieties there are in that benignant influence on younger minds, which must be one of earth's best delights,—the result of character proved through many years! Oh, what varieties there are in recollections,—the blessed spirits or spectre ghosts of life's crimes or virtues! Oh, what varieties there are of anticipation, —the prospect of the future growing out of the past, and judging the past, and conferring the benediction of hope, or the condemnation of apprehension!

And how naturally, then, we may presume that the same system will continue. We have a glimpse of the principle on which the operations of Providence are conducted,

and may argue by analogy to its future application. As each period of life is followed by a judgment, so we may expect will life's own final period here, in its recommencement hereafter. And as each of these earthly judgments embraces not only the portion of time which immediately preceded, but includes all that had passed before that; as the judgment of maturity is not only on the school, but on that as including the nursery too; and that of old age, not only on maturity, but on maturity as inclusive of all earlier times—for even in hoary hairs the sins of a man's youth may compass him about;—so should we expect the future judgment not to be only on old age, not to regard the faith or repentance of a dying moment; but to be on the whole life, and the whole character which is its result; "it shall be rendered to every man according to his deeds; to them who, by patient continuance in well-doing, seek for glory, honour, and immortality, eternal life; but unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that doeth evil."

I would have you remark that these successive judgments in life are by no means to be considered as perfectly, and from the first, judgments "according to righteousness;" but at the same time, that they are so *progressively;* and progressively both in the individual and in society. They are the more so in each as he advances in life; they are the more so in every stage of our existence as the world advances in wisdom. The enjoyments and sufferings to which children are subjected by parents are often measured by a very different standard from that of the child's moral and lasting good. The child is called *good* when the parent is gratified—it may be by the child's vanity. The child is called *naughty* when the parent is annoyed—it may be by the child's inquisitiveness or sincerity. Practically, parents make the laws of children's morality, and do not forget to put the consulting of their own convenience among the virtues. At school, the young as well as the old, the playmate as well as the taskmaster, come in for a share of the influence which operates on character and happiness. Their united voice pronounces a sounder judgment than that of the parent. But still a very imperfect one. It is often corrected, and sometimes reversed, by the world.

And the perfect man of the world is not a man of God. He is in harmony with existing institutions, opinions, tendencies; but in them how much there is of ignorance, error, selfishness, and vice! The success of maturity is not, by much, so sound a test of real worth as the peacefulness and hope of old age. *There* is the nearest approach towards the judgment of God, and the righteous dispensations of futurity. The individual has gone through a succession of trials, each superior to the preceding, and at last he goes to that bar from which there is no appeal, because it is that of omniscient truth and love, to which all the rest were preparatory. And as they are in the order of progression to the individual, so are they all improving in the improvement of society. There is a great advance from Solomon's proverb to Paul's precept: the first, "He that spareth the rod spoileth the child;" and the latter, "Ye fathers, provoke not your children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord." With all that is said about the love of offspring, it is an instinct that yet needs much enlightenment to make it a pure moral principle. However, it does make progress. And so does the school. In our days, the character of utility has become much more legibly impressed on education. Nor are the maxims and institutions of social life either fixed or retrograde. It is the duty of all, it is the especial work of Christians, to aid this progress in all these departments. We should aim at bringing the family, the school, the community, all nearer to the Christian standard. They should be moralised. The growth of truth, righteousness, and love is the ascent of earth towards heaven. Man's judgment should be rectified by degrees to bring it into accordance with the judgment of God. What we expect after death should be our guidance in what we do before death.

In the history of Christ, our great exemplar, we see this doctrine, as we do all Christian doctrines. His mission was a judgment, an approving judgment, on the preparation of his early life. He fulfilled his work so perfectly, because thirty years of preparatory seclusion had been passed so wisely and holily. Had he remained as ignorant as Adam, he might, when the temptation came, have fallen as Adam fell. Had he not subdued self-glory more than

even Moses, he might in some miracle have sinned with his lips, and not given God the glory, as Moses at the waters of Meribah. Had he not arrived at more enlightened conceptions of the Divine character than Jonah, he might, when the storm was brooding, have thought, like him, of flying from the presence of the Lord. Say not that he was a man of sorrows: suffering is not punishment; and the miseries of benevolence are happier than the happiness of selfishness. He had lived to be the Christ, and in being the Christ he was rewarded. And this again was the probation to a further judgment. He had *his* judgment after death. His work had its crown when his Father raised him from the dead and gave him glory.

In the contemplation, then, of this providential plan, let us discipline ourselves, and be diligent in that culture of the heart which shall not lose its reward. There is no great stretch of imagination, there is no vast and indistinct remoteness of thought, in the notion of *after death the judgment*. It is brought home to us, if in an observant spirit, and with the light of divine truth, we look around us. "The judgment is set, and the books are opened;" though the full contents are not yet disclosed, nor the final award pronounced. The doctrine of judgment resolves itself into the question of immortality. There is a change of circumstances implied in the idea of immortality, which illustrates the retributory nature of the world to come. Immortal man cannot be dependent on food; and there cannot, therefore, be the necessity of labour, or any of its results, in wealth, rank, power, and all the other consequences so abundant here. Now, mere existence in a world where wealth is unknown must be a judgment of condemnation on those bond-slaves of Mammon who here exist only for its attainment. Mere existence in a world where all earthly distinction of rank is abolished must be a judgment of condemnation on the vain ambition that lives in others' admiring eyes and obsequious homage. Mere existence in a world where sense is but the agent of mind, must be a judgment of condemnation on those whose pleasure is nothing better than animal gratification. Mere existence in a world where the perfections of Deity will be so exhibited as that their display is called his presence, must be a judgment of condemnation on profanity. And the same process that

punishes must also reward. The circumstances which are torture to the avaricious, the vain, the sensual, and the profane, must be blessedness to the generous, the meek, the pure, and the devout. They only make another ascent in the graduated scale of being. True, it is hidden from them; but how much knew they of the school, when they were infants in the nursery? How much knew they of the business of this bustling world, when they were boys at school? They know it is under the direction of the same universal Father; and, therefore, they trustingly exclaim, "Now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

THE CHURCH ESTABLISHMENT INCONSISTENT WITH THE SPIRIT OF CHRISTIANITY AND THE WELL-BEING OF SOCIETY.

A Discourse delivered at Finsbury Chapel, South Place, Moorfields, on Sunday, March 16, 1834; *to which is added a copy of the Petition to Parliament, from the Members of the Congregation.*

[1834.]

Some coincidences may perhaps be observed in the facts referred to, and a few of verbal expression, between the following discourse and an article in the *Monthly Repository* for April. They arose from the circumstance that both were written within the same week, and the discourse was intended only for oral publication. Some misrepresentations have combined with the wish of many hearers to induce the author to print it, which is accordingly done, precisely as it was delivered, with the single exception of the introduction of a sentence in the commencement of the discourse, which was in fact uttered afterwards when the Petition was read. The author could have wished that the circumstances would have allowed him to send it forth in a more perfect form; but alteration was not consistent with one of the reasons, just mentioned, for its publication. Nor is it a time to stand on the niceties of literary composition, when the great struggle has begun for that entire and universal religious liberty which, as it is a national right, cannot fail to prove a national blessing.

My text this morning is the entire New Testament, every portion of which breathes a spirit of truth, piety, justice, freedom, charity, instruction, and improvement; and every portion of which is, therefore, in accordance with the principles and feelings which, as a congregation, you are invited to express by petitioning the legislature for the full concession of the rights of dissenters, for the dissolution of the unhallowed union of Church and State, and for rendering efficient the public property which is now perverted to sectarian, party, or private purposes, for

the general instruction and advantage of the community. The petition, as prepared by your committee, will be placed for signatures immediately after service. It purports to be the petition of the entire congregation, and not of its male portion exclusively. I trust it will be signed by all; for every woman, as well as every man, every being of intelligence, piety, and beneficence, is interested in its object, which is the removal of obstructions from the growth and diffusion of intelligence, the deliverance of religion from perversion and corruption, and the realisation of the blessings of national instruction, without distinction of sex, class, or station. My discourse will show the general principles on which its allegations and prayers are founded.

The whole New Testament is my text; for the whole New Testament is an enforcement of the admonition not to make religion an affair of state, and a demonstration of the incompatibility of such an alliance with genuine Christianity. The state-priesthood of Judæa influenced their countrymen to the rejection of Christ, and thereby to their destruction as a nation. They slew the Saviour, and persecuted his followers. Their violence was so intolerable that the Christians were compelled even to look for the predicted destruction of Jerusalem as a deliverance. One chief reason for this hatred was, that Christ's kingdom was not of this world. It was based on spirituality and liberty. He prohibited dominion amongst his followers—not civil government, surely—there is no question about that; but religious authority—that authority which the temporal power creates, assumes, and delegates in religion when it meddles therewith. The broadest principles are repeatedly laid down, the plainest precepts are repeatedly enforced, against the notions, the spirit, the practices, which must infallibly result from the union of Christianity with the state, and which have, in fact, resulted from it in this country, as in all countries where that unhappy experiment has been instituted. The whole New Testament, therefore, is my text, and I shall proceed to its application.

The plea of Divine authority for the incorporation of religion with the state is generally abandoned now; and well that it is; for when we take the end of the Bible as well as the beginning, the destruction of Jerusalem as well as the conquest of Canaan, Christ as well as Moses, the

preaching of the gospel as well as the promulgation of the law—the Divine authority is plainly not for the institution of state religion, but for its abrogation; for divesting religion of temporal and political adjuncts, and for treating it as a matter of individual conscience, between each person and his God. The only plausible argument now put forth for a Church Establishment is, that by the political patronage of a Creed, a Clergy, and a Church, religious instruction is insured to the community more permanent in its duration, more efficient in its character, and more ample in its extent, than could be obtained by any other means. I shall briefly comment on each of these particulars, into which the utility of an Establishment is resolved.

It is often affirmed that only the support of the civil power can certainly provide for the continuance from generation to generation of religious instruction. I know of but one historical fact that has ever been alleged in proof of this assumption, that is, the extinction of the Christian churches of Asia and Africa. But those churches fell beneath the flood of Mahometan invasion. No previous Establishment, which, indeed, many of them did possess, could have upheld them through that earthquake of society. The same blow annihilated the civil power itself. The whole current of history shows the self-perpetuating energy of Christianity. By this it lived and flourished through its first three centuries—centuries of fierce persecution. It has never been so progressive as before it was established; and since that, even in the feebleness of a corrupt form, in the midst of idolatry in the one case, in the presence of a fierce fanaticism in the other, and under the ban of authority, it has prolonged its existence in the Christians of St. Thomas in the East, and in the Church of long-oppressed and trampled Greece. French Protestantism and English Dissent have also perpetuated themselves through many generations, in defiance of different degrees of persecution. The Church of England is not so much older than Nonconformity as to derive any argumentative advantage on the score of superior stability. What preserved religion through the shock of the American revolution? Not the Establishment, though America was in the diocese of London, for that gave way at once. Tithes and episcopacy vanished together, when the drums of inde-

pendence beat to arms; but religion lived safely through the struggle, to demonstrate, as the condition of the United States does now demonstrate, the superior energy of the voluntary principle. Indeed, since the invention of printing, the necessity of an Establishment for perpetuating Christianity, is of all absurdities one of the greatest. The Bible will perpetuate Christianity, and the Bible cannot be hidden. Indeed, the power of a political hierarchy was tried upon it for that purpose, for many centuries. The self-preserving power of the gospel kept pure Christianity from extinction through a thousand years—the "millennium of darkness," as it has been called; in spite of the desire of the Roman Establishment, which then comprehended all the Establishments of Europe, to extinguish it in the corruptions which prevailed. If the manuscript Bible was inextinguishable, the printed Bible must be perfectly self-sufficient for preserving the truth therein enshrined. It is not by the breath of kings or parliaments that "the word of God liveth and abideth for ever."

The effect of Establishment on the character of religious instruction, its simplicity, purity, efficacy, and universal fitness, will so fully appear in the remarks I am about to offer, that I shall pass over this topic now, and say a few words on the amplitude and due proportion of the religious instruction which a hierarchy provides for a community. It is continually said, that without such provision, religion would be least offered where wanted most, and many portions of a country be hopelessly abandoned to the grossest darkness. Again I appeal to facts. Does a town in the United States ever arrive at a population of three hundred without some building being used as a place of worship? I believe not; and that no list of such places has been or can be produced by the advocates of Establishments. With a facility, which they do not possess, of accommodating itself to the condition and wants of any state of society, the Voluntary Principle provides for thinly peopled districts the advantages of an itinerating system, which for the time is fully adequate, and prepares for a more permanent plan the moment it can be advantageously introduced. But why look to America? It was this itinerating system, under the direction of Wesley and Whitfield, that actually raised from barbarian darkness whole districts

of our own country; raised them from the brutish condition in which two centuries of State religion, in the Protestant form, besides all the preceding centuries of the Catholic Establishment, had left them pitilessly and carelessly; raised them in spite of that very Establishment which arrogates a monopoly of the religious instruction of the people. An Establishment is not formed on the principle of supply according to necessity; its supply is proportioned, not to the wants of districts, but to their wealth. Look through the country, and see if the multitude of churches does not follow the fertility of the soil and the accumulation of property. There is a total absence of proportion between the number of livings and that of the population, or the extent of districts. For one mile and for nineteen, for fifty persons and for twenty thousand, this Church makes the same spiritual provision, even while descanting on the irregular operation of voluntary contribution. For secular purposes, and in consequence of its secular character, it follows the division of parishes, than which no division can be less adapted for the purpose of religious instruction. The Methodist circuits are laid out with far greater propriety. But on this irregularity another is superinduced, not to correct but to aggravate—that of non-residence. Out of 10,533 benefices, the returns to Parliament (in 1832) gave a total of no fewer than 6120 non-resident incumbents; *i. e.* the fleece, and not the crook, constituted the connection between the shepherd and the flock, in the case of a large majority. The working clergy are universally ill-paid; below the average, all things considered, of dissenting ministers, even in this country, where dissenters have to bear double burdens. I gladly hasten from this disgusting part of the subject. It is evident that no voluntary system can be worse, can be so bad. The irregularities of zeal can never rival the irregularities of cupidity. Even a partial provision for instruction were better than universal provision for spoliation.

I return to my text: the New Testament is a book teaching truth, piety, justice, freedom, charity, instruction, and improvement; and on each of these points I argue that its dictates should impel us, on the present occasion, to exert ourselves peacefully, judiciously, but decidedly, for

obtaining the legislative abrogation of that union between Church and State to which each and all of these qualities are opposed. If they suffer by it, it cannot be in accordance with Christianity. When I speak of the secular establishment of religion as hostile to Christian truth, I do not refer merely to the incompatibility of its forms with our own particular views of the Divine nature and character; it would be a narrow and paltry way of treating the subject now before us, to make it hinge upon that controversy. Independently of particular tenets, there must always be a strong presumption against the entire truth of an established faith. And without entering into any logical or scriptural discussion of any dogma, there is a broad and strong presumption against the articles, creeds, liturgy, and homilies of the Church being the depository of pure truth. They were fashioned in an age of comparative darkness. They were changed and modified under influences of a corrupting description. The taint of forgery is on the commencement of the twentieth article, and on the whole of the Athanasian Creed. They scarcely reached their final form before they ceased to embody the national faith and worship. Most of the master spirits of our country that have written at all on theology have written against some portion or other of their multifarious contents. Their imposition has from generation to generation driven a large portion of intelligent piety into the ranks of dissent. Many of the most distinguished members of the Church have yet been mental dissenters from the truth of some of its declarations. They have not only failed of being a national standard of faith, but of being the universal standard of the ministers of the Church itself; it is notorious that many have lived, taught, and died in its communion, holding what is called heresy of every kind and degree that has existed in the land.

The fact is, that this object, of which the Church has totally failed, is in itself impracticable, undesirable, and incompatible with the spirit of the New Testament. It wars alike with Christianity and with nature, with reason and with religion. How totally different was the course pursued by Christ and the apostles! What indications are there that such a scheme ever entered their minds as that of tying down all intellects, by an accumulation of

propositions, into creeds to be believed? and of tying down all hearts, by prescribing the modes and forms in which pious emotion should express itself through all generations? Where are the creeds of the first Christians? Where are their liturgies? What more is there throughout the New Testament than the broadest and simplest principle as the basis of truth; and the utmost latitude of choice in worship, so that prayer was but the heart's desire, and thanksgiving the grateful melody of the soul? Such an attempt is false alike to the nature of man and to the nature of Christianity. It is a total mistake or perversion of that in which religion consists. Christianity is too fine and ethereal an essence to be thus exhibited in a hard, defined, tangible form; crystallised, as it were, and presented to the senses, instead of pervading the mental and moral constitution, as do the great and viewless influences of the material universe.

When and where did the great Teacher, who best knew how to teach, bring forth creeds and articles, containing abstract propositions by dozens and hundreds; some so plain, that not one man in a million can doubt their truth; others so obscure, that no two men in a million would agree as to the conclusiveness of the evidence, or the meaning of the terms; and require of his apostles and disciples to declare that they believed all these, and would believe and teach them to the end of their lives? When and where did he ordain, that in all the great actions of human life there should be certain forms of words; true or untrue; appropriate or inappropriate; decorous or indecorous; believed or not believed by speaker or by hearer, as the case might be; but that still in the great actions of human life, such forms should be recited by certain persons, with certain garbs, and in certain places, in order to sanctify those actions and give them validity? Can any thing be more unlike than all this is to his ramblings over Judæa, undistinguished, himself and his apostles, by garb and pretension from the mass of their countrymen; telling beautiful parables of the parent and the prodigal, the master and the labourer; little regardful of the ceremonies of sabbath or of synagogue, doing good in any way, and worshiping in any place, in city or in wilderness, by the riverside or on the mountain's top, with such words as feeling

prompted, repeated when that was incessant, and diversified as that was varied! Why, the longest creed in the New Testament has but two articles: "There is one God, and one Mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself a ransom for all, to be testified in due time." And both of these are brought into perplexity and confusion by the established faith. All the liturgy of the New Testament is but the Lord's Prayer—a form as informal as well can be, compared with any that decrees of kings, parliaments, or synods have ever enacted should express the emotions of nations. The religion of the gospel is a spirit of love and light and liberty. It is a divine stimulus to all that is pure, lofty, and beneficent in humanity. It descends into the depths of our nature, to raise it from degradation. It ascends to the heights of our nature, to crown it with glory only a little lower than that of the angels. To treat it as Establishments do, is to attempt the subjugation of the invisible fluids, which chemistry shows to be so diffused and powerful, to the laws which regulate the grosser forms and action of mechanical power. Its genuine influence evaporates in a machinery so utterly inappropriate. So far as Christianised minds and hearts exist under the rule of an Establishment—and that much of this kind does exist and always has existed in the Establishment, is a truth we contemplate with gladness—it exists not by, but in defiance of, all that is peculiar in that misnamed religious machinery. And even if the end were not so unworthy of the gospel, if a perpetuated uniformity of faith and worship were compatible with man's interests and religion's dictates, a political Establishment like the English hierarchy is the worst mode of aiming at that purpose. There are two methods which approximate much more closely to all of it that is attainable.

A voluntary sect preserves its creed from generation to generation with much more certainty than the Establishment. There is less temptation to hypocrisy in a sect unpatronised. There is greater facility of disjunction on account of difference of opinion in a sect unpatronised. Those who disagree are far more likely to desire to leave; or should they not, it is far more easy to make them leave. Look at the fluctuations which the established faith has undergone! See Puritanism, up at one time and down at

another! Calvinism, Arminianism, Latitudinarianism, Evangelism, each in turn having the ascendency, and being for the time the one everlasting faith of that everlasting body, with all its everlasting creeds, canons, prayers, and homilies. Do the annals of any dissenting sect in this country show any thing like this vicissitude? With the single exception of the English Presbyterians, with whom there has been change of opinion in consequence of unchanged freedom of opinion, has not every party that can be named,—have not the Independents, have not the Baptists, have not the Methodists, both Whitfieldian and Wesleyan,—preserved far more closely their original creeds, and been far more uniform in the general outline and spirit of their religion, than has the Church? I have already hinted the reason. They had only their religion to look after. They did not identify themselves with a province or a nation. If Episcopalianism be simple-hearted in the pursuit of perpetual uniformity as a paramount object, why not put itself into that position in which experience shows it will approximate far more nearly to its accomplishment?

There is but one other way. A church aiming at uniformity, and identifying itself with a nation, must persecute to the very utmost—to proscription, exile, and death. In that way there may be uniformity, though but for a limited period; such uniformity as that of Spain before it was broken in upon by the lightnings that flashed through the whole European hemisphere. An Inquisition may crush the expression of dissent. It will also crush the intelligence of a nation. This is the dilemma before the Church of England; at least it *was*. There were difficulties in the way of its persecuting to the extent necessary for national uniformity; and the impracticability of the means should have induced the relinquishment of the purpose. The course which has been pursued, halting between two paths, the middle course of an extorted toleration, is alike inefficient and vexatious. What has it done? Has it preserved the church from progressive and unconquerable secession? Has it prevented the *disunion of the church from the nation?*—a disunion which it requires no spirit of prophecy to say must be followed by the disunion of the church from the state. Do we not see the result of all this vain and crooked policy in the movements now taking place throughout the land?

Do we not hear it in that cry for the redress of grievances and the recognition of rights, which rolls like thunder over churches, halls, and palaces, and of which peal will follow peal with increasing awfulness, until there is no longer any interposition between man's conscience and his God, but in civil freedom and equality he shall look up to heaven from any spot of earth on which he may choose to kneel, and receive its unobstructed and unembittered influences upon his soul?

Some dissenters have treated their grievances in detail; others, more wisely, as I think, have gone at once to the main principle. But that very detail shows the perversity of principle on which an Establishment is founded. Registration—the record often so important to individuals, so useful to philosophers and philanthropists, so essential to the purposes of legislation; the record of births, deaths, and marriages—this has to be demanded, with vehement and repeated outcry, as if men were struggling for the dearest rights of conscience. And why? because the temporal interests, the cupidity, the domination of an established hierarchy, creates a difficulty, hard to be overcome, in the way of so very simple, easy, convenient, and necessary an arrangement for the common comfort of the community. With that same voice of thunder have dissenters to demand what, it seems, except under the most preposterous and vexatious limitations, they are not yet to obtain—the liberty of celebrating their own marriages. What example did Christ set of intermeddling with that contract? In some of its arrangements, as they then existed, he showed the bearing upon it of the great moral principle which he taught, and there he left it. He wrought no miracle in order to compel people to enter into it by a theological form of which their consciences disapproved, or by any religious form and priestly presence whatever. He left it as he found it, a civil institution for social purposes. But priestcraft interferes with every thing; and its interference in this case has created a plentiful mass of mischief. It pursues man to his very grave. After having vexed him in life with sectarian anathemas, pronouncing his eternal damnation, it insists on the monopoly—should he wish in death to lay his bones by those of his forefathers—of saying over him

the purchased benediction that promises indiscriminately the "sure and certain hope of a joyful resurrection." It meets man alike in the pursuit of the highest and the lowest interests—those of the mind and those of the pocket; taxing him for a religion which he does not believe, and debarring him from literary honours to which he may be entitled. Strange subjects to be brought together in one discussion, in one complaint, in one petition! The levying of church-rates, and the imposition of a test in the seats of learning! Where will not such a tree shoot forth its pestilential branches? "Cut it down; why cumbereth it the ground?" Christ enabled Peter by a miracle to pay tribute to Cæsar; but he never made him an involuntary contributor to the temple of Diana of the Ephesians. And had Christ ordained the erection of a temple of his own, sooner should every fish that swam in river, lake, or sea have brought its piece of gold to Peter's net, than the Jews have been compelled to pay the tax, even of a widow's mite, to put one stone upon another. And, oh, what degradation is it of those universities, where learning, glorious learning, undefiled and unperverted, should summon all the intellect of a nation to expatiate in richness, strength, and freedom; encouraging all, while the worthiest was crowned,—that even here the sectarian spirit, in all its native littleness, armed by the state with unnatural power, should throw its insulting tests and dogmas in men's faces, and turn them back from the portals of the mansions of their fathers' house! Is it not a prodigious anomaly, that now, in the nineteenth century, there should be efforts making, not only to keep up the test which restricts literary and scientific degrees to churchmen, but to preserve the monopoly of granting them?

But this is one manifestation of the hostility which must ever be connected with the struggle for permanent uniformity of faith against the development of intelligence. The institution under whose influence our schools of learning would actually have refused to certify that Euclid was a mathematician, Socrates a moral philosopher, Hippocrates a physician, Solon a jurisconsult, or even Orpheus a musician, unless they had subscribed the articles, or become members of the episcopal sect, cannot be expected to be more favourable towards diffused intelligence than towards

eminent intelligence. It may be expected that its dark shadow should darken alike on mountain and on valley. It has no anxiety for the general education of the people, if that education is to be out of its own pale and beyond its own control. And when sprang up popular education? Only after Joseph Lancaster had traversed the land, the voluntary missionary of knowledge, and roused a spirit of humanity too strong to be put down or tampered with. All incorporations of creeds and priesthoods with the state are, from their very nature, clogs upon the spread of knowledge, the expansion of mind, the progression of humanity. It is therefore that we feel this subject so strongly. If a sect injured none but itself,—if it only put upon its own neck, in an enlightened age, the yoke fabricated in a comparatively barbarous one; if it only misapplied its own resources of money and influence,—the case would be very different; we might lament the infatuation, but we should have no ground for complaint and legislative appeal. But when it injures the whole country, when it wants the nation to wear this yoke, when it misapplies the resources and inheritance of the community, by which the entire population might be instructed, and well instructed,—then the very stones might cry out, and the New Testament would be a dead book unless its spirit were loud and strong in our hearts and voices.

Oh! one's soul would be sick and weary, if it were not for the hope, the confident hope, of far better times approaching: and come they must; heaven and earth cry out for them, and the common heart of man! That public opinion which cannot long be resisted, demands, and will obtain, the abolition of all religious distinctions in men's civil relations and social concerns. And surely, however fearful some good men may be of its approach, the reality will be such as to gratify all good men. The great sectarian power removed, the acerbity of all sectarianism must be mitigated. Those who prefer Episcopacy will still have their bishops, deans, and all the gradations and orders which they deem needful for edification, only they will not have to struggle for them with an unwilling people. Those who think that other forms of faith and discipline are better, will act on their convictions without becoming thereby a degraded caste, or

having to use the language of dissent, protest, and remonstrance. Their several schemes of good may be pursued with less antagonism; their differences will become lighter, their coöperation heartier. Truth and charity will evolve themselves from the chaos of theological party; and, the uniformity of faith being no longer a state object, the bond of love and peace may become that of a voluntary union. Much good there may be in each, from the stateliest Episcopalian to the wildest Methodist; and much also in each there doubtless is to be unlearned: the influences of freedom and equality are the most likely to cherish the former and correct the latter, and reproduce the time when the world said, "See how these Christians love one another."

And if, besides preparing the way for this propitious condition of things as to religion, the legislature should go a step further,—should apply to the purposes of a strictly national education an adequate portion of the fund now wasted on no earthly purpose of usefulness,—we may indeed anticipate an era of true glory for our country. After the claims of the present life-possessors are satisfied, there is nothing which can fairly impede so righteous an appropriation. Providence has endowed the nation with this noble inheritance. Theology is too divided to possess it for national purposes. What claim, then, is there to which that of National Education is not paramount? This would indeed be an establishment of Christianity in the only sense in which Christianity can consistently be established. Instruction, free instruction, might be brought home to every door. In fact, it should be obligatory; giving the parent the option, by himself, or by private instruction, of educating his child as he prefers. But as the power of life and death, which was once possessed over the child's body, has been taken away as a barbarism, why should that of life and death over the soul be upheld? What a moral magnificence would there be in a universally educated people! The joy in heaven over a sinner that repenteth would swell to rapture over a great nation repenting and regenerated; and blessed spirits would look down from their seats of glory with tears of delight. Oh, how much of the poverty that fills our streets with misery; how much of the temptation that crowds our gaols with criminals; how much of the erroneous struggling that exasperates our population to

animosity, that sometimes threatens to dissolve the bonds of society,—would vanish with the education of the people! How many of the absurd prejudices and institutions which bewilder the true notions of right and wrong, and make so many victims in all ranks of society, would speedily wear out, as the philosophy of Christian morality applied itself to perfecting the science of virtue and the art of happiness! How would knowledge ascend and expand, till the whole form of society would rise into its fair and full proportions; and our country commence the grand advance towards the ultimate destiny of man upon earth—that of universal association for universal good! For when knowledge shall cover the face of the earth even as the waters cover the sea, like those waters it shall unite the remotest nations, and reflect heaven's brightest loveliness. Knowledge is the source of virtue; virtue is the means of happiness; happiness is the pledge and earnest of immortality; and so ascends the golden chain of human destiny, from the dust of earth to the throne of God in heaven.

COPY OF THE PETITION.

To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled.

The Petition of the Undersigned, being Protestant Dissenters of both sexes, assembling in South-Place Chapel, Finsbury, of which the Rev. W. J. Fox is Minister,

Showeth—

That your Petitioners approach your Honourable House, not only as Protestant Dissenters, but as Christians and citizens, seeking the redress of their grievances, under the firm conviction that the continuance of those grievances must be not less injurious to the community at large than galling and degrading to themselves.

That your Petitioners are earnestly desirous of such amendments in the existing laws as shall secure the

public benefit of a correct registration of births, marriages, and deaths; allow the marriage contract to be entered into without submission to a prescribed religious ceremony; prohibit any restriction of the advantages and honours of the Universities by the imposition of a theological test; and exonerate all classes from compulsory payments towards the support of a church from which they dissent: but that your Petitioners regard these and many other evils which might be enumerated as merely emanations from ONE GREAT PRACTICAL GRIEVANCE, namely, THE ALLIANCE OF A CHURCH WITH THE STATE, so that, while one sect is established, all others are only tolerated; and their members are, by the very fact of this legal partiality, subjected to insult, injury, and degradation.

That the adoption of Christianity as a State Religion has impaired the purity and impeded the progress of its principles; has promoted despotism, persecution, and bloodshed; has brought suspicion and contempt upon the character of its ministers, and contravened its beneficent object of advancing "Peace on earth and good will amongst men."

That the investiture of any sect with exclusive political privileges is utterly at variance with the spirit of the Christian religion; obstructs the intellectual and moral improvement of the people; is detrimental to the public peace and the harmony of social intercourse; invades the civil rights of individuals, and tends to subvert the liberties and prosperity of the nation.

That the appropriation by the Episcopal Church of the funds which the pious munificence of our ancestors set apart for the relief of the poor and the spiritual culture of the entire population is totally inconsistent with the accomplishment of those purposes, and deprives the community of its intended heritage of gratuitous and universal instruction; your Petitioners, therefore, respectfully submit to your Honourable House that, in the present state of religious opinion and of society, the most legitimate application of those funds, after due provision for their present recipients,

would be the establishment of a wise, liberal, and comprehensive plan of National Education.

That your Petitioners disclaim any hostility towards the Episcopal Church in its spiritual capacity; they desire on its behalf the same impartial protection and religious freedom which they claim for themselves and other Dissenters; and they pray your Honourable House to dissolve its connection with the State, for the common benefit of conformist and nonconformist, for the honour of religion, and the well-being of the community.

And your Petitioners will ever pray.

END OF VOL. III.

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